

The Substance of His House

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THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS HOUSE

POEMS

BY

PROSSER HALL FRYE

"Thinketh it came of being ill at ease ;
He hated that he cannot change his cold
Nor cure its ache."

CALLEAN ON SETEROS.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

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LYRICS.

THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS HOUSE.

You say you do not love me any more ;
And so I may not hold your hand or kiss
Your forehead as I used, for it is wrong
To cling together after love is gone
Except for one farewell and final kiss—
I will not take it now but wait a while,
Since one should never hurry on an end,
For the end always hastens of itself ;
The things we know are temporal, and love—
No matter, let us talk of something else.

The days are growing shorter ; we are done
With the long summer-evenings and the dusk
We thought was made especially for us.
Now after supper one can hardly see
Across the narrow river to the marsh
Where weep the willows and where moves the mist
And where the weeds are trailing in the water ;
And soon the ghosts will go along the bank

Paraded by me like a spectacle,
Till the unsatisfied, vague midnight drew
My restless feet to wander by the river.

It was by this same river we first met—
A little higher where the stream is full
And in the spring runs level with its banks,
Like headlong youth with hope ; and it was June
And the first flush of summer. In the woods
The birds were singing, for the morn was new,
The dewdrops were like eyes amid the grass,
The river ran in jewels to the sun,
And all the young things of the earth were glad
So that you often smiled without a reason
Or broke into involuntary song.
But I was brooding on my dark dead mind,
And had no feeling for such things as these,
Although I knew that they were fair and good
And altogether were desirable ;
So without feeling we are dry and dust,
A little pinch of dust between the fingers
Of a brute-universe. You walked beside,
Speaking but little and that little well.
I liked you for your quietness of face,
Not immobile but having moods like music—
Such voiceless music as a player hears

Before he puts his fingers to the keys.
We walked away the morning. When you spoke
Your voice was like the running of a brook
That seems a portion of oneself, nor jars
Like things external.

When we walked again,
It was a little later in the month
Across the moonlight lying on a garden,
Broad and sufficient—where red roses grew,
A place of promise once but run to waste
And bounded by an indistinct gray hedge.
On one side was a brook, and on another
The dusty roadway like a path of ghosts,
And on the third an orchard and a meadow,
Covered with daisies, an unearthly sea
Beneath the naked footsteps of the moon,
And on the fourth a tangle of old vines,
Where there had been a terraced vineyard once—
All fair with moonlight. It is good to live
Simply for the recurrence of such nights
As June holds in her bosom, close and warm
When all the universe is sick with love ;
For love is not restricted to the world
Of men, but moves in the inanimate.
One atom draws another as you draw me ;

And if they may, they meet and are fulfilled ;
One planet draws another through the void
By some mysterious strange means ; the stars
Take them companions in their loneliness ;
The witch-face of the moon is shrunken and pale
With longing for the earth ; the rooted plants
Communicate by means of messengers—
For everything according to its order
So moves and is so moved, or else were dead ;
But woe to him who loves himself alone
And lives thereby, as I had lived so long.
The influence of moon and star and flower,
The summer and luxuriance of earth,
Worked in me like a ferment, for your face
Gave purpose to my wandering desires
And thoughts diffused. I cannot analyze,
As is so fashionable now, this love—
How much is spirit and how much is flesh,
What part is passionate and what part pure,
According to the standards of to-day,
Or how the higher builds upon the lower ;
But somehow from the dunghill and the dirt
There springs the incorruptible white flower.

After the birth of love, unrecognized
And unconfessed as yet, we often walked

Together while the unreckoned wealth of June
Was scattered with her prodigal profuseness—
Sometimes in the morning when the grass was
fresh

And covered with the cobwebs spun by night ;
Rarely at noonday drowsy with the bees
And dizzy with the heat ; but frequently
When the quail whistled all along the upland,
Or in the lovers' twilight with the star
Of evening and the kindling fireflies.
So June went onward, merging with July.

One evening we were walking in a wood
Along a narrow road where damp and dark
The shadows were at noon ; between the ruts
The coarse grass flourished and the toadstools
grew

Like morbid fancies in a mind diseased ;
While here and there beside the path were pools
Where water had collected in the spring
And the sun could not drink it for the leaves.
We had gone outward by a devious way ;
But being overtaken by the dark
Followed the shortest path on our return.
And you were startled, for the shadows crept
Like formless insects up and down the trees,

And straggled now and then across the road.
Our talk was whispered as in deference
To the unknown evil that besieges life.
The stifling heat was like a heavy hand
Laid at the base of the brain. And so we went
Subdued until a turning of the road
Revealed a low, broad marsh, and in the midst
A something white and shapeless like a shroud
Over a corpse that rose and beckoned to us.
Then you were scared and caught at me and
 clung,
So I forgot the shadow on the marsh,
Feeling your body and the warmth of it,
The pressure of your arms, your straying hair,
The breath of your moist mouth relaxed a little
With heat and hurry and the sudden fright ;
Until the fire smouldering in my veins
Flamed like a conflagration and I drew
Your face a little nearer so your lips
Kindled from mine and in the night were red,
And you forgot the shadow on the marsh.
But when we drew apart to go our way—
Yet our eyes mingled as we went—you said,
“ Where is the ghost that startled me ? ” I looked
And all about the marsh was one wide mist,

Diaphanous and uniform. I answered,
“It was the mist just rising.” But you shook
Your head and laughed, replying : “It was silly
To tremble so, but it was not the mist
That frightened me ; it was some kindly ghost
That made you say you love me. But I wish
You had not told me all the things you have,
For you said once when we first knew each
other,

‘Love is the fancy of a summer-day,
Born of the heat and bound to perish with it.’
I am so very sorry for those words,
For who refuses to believe in love
Can never love ; and he who thinks love ends
Can never love.” Then I, caressing you,
Made answer, thinking only of myself :
“Love is as changing as the rest of life,
And no one can predict the day of change.
One love may die to-morrow and another
Endure through this vicissitude to death,
And even in death be stable—and beyond.
But since your love is very sweet, my love,
Sweeter than all the drippings of the comb,
The ooze of honey on the feet of bees,
Let us two love each other while we can,

Although to-morrow is not to-day and none
Can answer for it—for your love is sweet.”
This I said thinking of my fickleness
That I should change the first and so escape.
But these words pleased you little, for you drew
Your clinging hand from mine and went alone.
This made me sadder than the falling night is
Or than the dark environs of the grave ;
For I declare that even in that hour
I loved you better than the blind love light
Or exiles love their native earth. We went
So separated till we left the road,
And here and there began to gleam the lights
Such as a country village shows at night—
Few, indistinct and distant. Then I said—
My voice belied me, it was hard and cold
While I was molten, “ Do not leave me so.”
It might have been the voice of one who speaks
Supplying words he thinks appropriate
To some dull story that he does not like.
But it was all you needed ; for your mouth,
Which had been wilted like a flower by frost,
Bloomed, and your arms like tendrils clasped and
clung,
And your tongue rippled, “ But I love you so,”

Over and over like a bird whose song
Never becomes monotonous.

We parted ;

I walked the night to breathe and think awhile.

Listen ! Do these things move you not at all ?
Your eyelids do not flutter and your mouth
That used to be so tremulous, is still,
Like a dead mouth, and mine is living yet—
I would it had been ashes ere this day,
I would that it might crumble into dust !
You think that I deceive you, that I lie,
That I have never loved you, that I love
Only myself and joy in my own words.
Oh, God ! I live in such a narrow house,
Builded of clay—so low, contemptible,
With only two poor windows near the roof
To see through, and I shriek through one small
chink.

If I could break my wall and crash through yours
Into your house till standing face to face
With you yourself I made you understand,—
Let me alone ; I am immured and mad ;
My house is but a bedlam——

You have heard

Some talk like this before ! It suits my mood !
Bear with me for the little that is left.

July ran out its course and August passed
Far on into the dog-days when the heat
Was like a passion. In the night no sleep
Visited me, but wild chaotic dreams
Like a fool's thought ; and in the stifling day
The body was rebellious as a beast.
Young love is helpless, for it gives itself
So freely, and its blood is exigent.
I have protected you against myself
In the temptations of the August nights,
Perhaps against yourself—I do not know—
These things are best forgotten ; you begin
A fair new life and leave the old to me.

One morning ere the sun as yet was high,
You came, and saying, " Kiss me on the eyes,
For I must leave you for a little while,
And yet a little while from you is long,"
Began to tremble and reiterate,
" My love, I wept all night to think of this—
That I must go ; and yet I cannot go ;
Oh, do not let me loose but hold your arms
About me that I never can go out,
For I am still unsatisfied with love."
With such like repetitions putting off
My hands you went and left me standing dumb,
Helpless, benumbed, bewildered, and confused.

So you departed with the month of August ;
And after the excitement of your presence
Followed an interval of calm like that
Which lets an agitated water clear,
The rubbish settles in a sediment,
Above it moves the bright transparent mass
Whereof a man may drink and be unhurt
As the whole substance purifies itself.
This was accomplished gradually. First,
There was a period of sharp distress
After your body was removed from mine,
As when a customary stimulant
Has been withdrawn, and then a bitter outbreak
Succeeded by the dumbness of exhaustion,
And finally a calm through which love moved
Silent and deep and strong and self-assured.

The afternoon was drooping in the West
Like a day-weary flower on its stalk,
A solitary cricket uttering
Its thin and intermittent noise forestalled
The autumn, as you came before the sun
Over the summit of the sentinel-hill
And down the track of sunlight on the slope,
Your features in the shadow but your hair
Lustrous and radiant. I watched you come

Out of the purple twilight at the base ;
Your face seemed chiselled of some cold gray
stone

Like an old statue's in the shifting sand
Of a great desert when the night descends
In its oppression and its mystery ;
Your eyes were full of broken promises ;
Your voice was like a trumpet of retreat
In a lost battle. "Let your arms hang loose
Since I have brought no love to your embrace
For I have gone too far on a wrong road,
Being mistaken else or misinformed"—

With many other things I did not hear
For puzzling on these hard and cruel words.
This was an hour or two hours since,
For we have spoken much to no effect,
Already in the valley it is late ;
For see ! There is the river in the hollow
Like a dark saying in the mouths of men.
Beyond the river are the marsh and mist
Where rose the ghost ; and out beyond the
marsh

But hidden by the trees that fringe its borders,
As lashes fringe the heavy lids of sleep,
The low secluded meadow of our love—

I know you loved me then undoubtingly ;
The yearning of your mouth, your timid words,
The yielding of your body and your cheek
Leaning to mine involuntarily
Sufficed to show me, though you now deny
That these things are significant. You say,
" I was mistaken," or " I thought I loved,"
Or " Do not blame me for my ignorance
Of my own mind," or like absurdities.
The river never freezes by mistake,
Nor does the new moon shine through ignorance,
Nor on your face had been the signs of love
Had love been absent. Therefore say no more ;
I know that this is but a lie of yours ;
And yet a lie may often serve the truth
In being wiser than the serpent is
And far too subtle. You have lied too well,
For were your story more improbable,
I should perhaps have been deceived by it.

Lo ! I have given the substance of my house
For love, and it is utterly condemned.
There are the broad bare walls, the clean-swept
floors,
The room with all its furniture removed
That I made fit for you to occupy—

It rests, a widower that never knew
The shy and sweet confusion of his bride.
Oh, love, my love, I dread the winter nights
In the dismantled ruin you have left
When all the faces that I ever knew
Will come and mock at me and say : " He thought
To make himself secure against the dark
And bitter cold and utter loneliness
Of an unloved old age ; he thought to shut
The memory of earlier failure out
By an enduring joy, and lo ! he moves
An alien among the homes of men."

There is the bait that has enticed so many—
Prosperity with children in its lap
That looks upon a fat and fruitful land,
Being content to sit self-satisfied
All day and sleep all night. So you prefer.
I am myself and I will work it out ;
I know, if ever I attain my end,
The end will be sufficient of itself ;
I know, if never I attain my end,
It will be better to have striven for it,
Although I die with beggars in a ditch,
Than live and love, and make myself as those
Whom you admire—men of small, mean minds

And even smaller, meaner souls. Then go,
And leave me to the river and the marsh,
The weeping willows and the moving mist,
The weeds and the emaciated moon,
The ghostly brooding on my dark dead mind.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

AN ODE.

I.

IN early winter ere the wind-blown flakes
Of snow in pity of the naked earth
Have covered it, the world is void of mirth ;
The slanting sun at noonday hardly breaks
The bank of clouds that veiled the spectral morn ;
The heavens lie forlorn,
For every established splendid star
And wandering reflective moon is hid,
While like the pale and melancholy day
The night is sad and gray,
The patient brutes lie shivering amid
The stiffened grass—so mournful all things are
Save those expectant hearts that understand
The day is close at hand
When maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
bring,
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing.

II.

But suddenly there is a wondrous change :
The snow-clouds drag and droop, the air is full
Of particles opaque and white like wool,
Till summer's gaudy gown seems old and strange.
Under the sky's assumed, indulgent frown
The winds go up and down ;
And merrily to aid the welcome work
Hurry to pile the snow in fleecy drifts
That nature's task may be the sooner done
And that the loosened sun
Set free the crystal colors from the rifts
Of frozen ponds and rivers where they lurk,
And all the earth be delicately dressed
For its expected guest,
While maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
bring,
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing,

III.

Behind us lies the dark uncertain time
Between the seasons. Look not back nor weep,
But let it seem a short and troubled sleep
From which we waken to another prime,

For now that our new days at last begin,
The air is cold and thin
With fretted frost, but wonderfully clear ;
And to the quiet bosom of the hill,
 Across the meadows, woods, and whitened
 fields,
 The timid distance yields
Its long kept secrets, and the winds are still
Along the morning's reddened verge to hear :
And so let all the coming hours accord
To glorify their Lord ;
Let maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
 bring,
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing.

IV.

But winter has enchained the centuries,
No longer do the bright-faced seraphim
Come winging down the buoyant winds and hymn
With their deep-toned celestial harmonies
For shepherds on the hills. The world is old
And torpid with the cold ;
Its splendor is but pale reflective ice
Above the shrivelled life that once was warm ;

Even the lean, quick face of man grows dull,
The wintry rigors lull
His energies to sloth, and shrink the form
That rose triumphant once. By what device,
By what strange charm shall numbing snow and
rime
Be melted from the time
Till maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
bring,
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing ?

v.

Now some have builded temples to the mind
Out of the shapeless weather-beaten blocks
That winds and rains have broken from the rocks
Of mountain-summits. There they have enshrined
An image of their own, which they call Law,
Whereto they bow in awe,
“We worship thee, the pitiless and strong.”
Others, whose leisure gives them little ease,
Bestir themselves to search old creeds (as
Rome,
Before she fell, brought home
Outlandish gods) for somewhat that will please

Their listless and luxurious moods ; while wrong
 Fattens upon the bodies of the poor.
 How long shall this endure,
Ere maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
 bring,
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing ?

VI.

And in the world disports a multitude
 Of satyrs, from whose teeth the lips gape wide
 With greed and lust that are unsatisfied,
Who, while the famished cry aloud for food,
 Drench deep their senses with forgetful wine,
 With sun-bleached poppies twine
Their heavy heads. An antic shape, half goat,
 With legs and hoofs in fashion of a brute,
 And with its angel's wings laid slanting wise
 Across its human eyes,
 Sits careless over all, unseeing, mute,
Blowing a madding pipe with hairy throat,
 And while the most so miserably fare
 But few are left to care
That maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
 bring
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing.

VII.

But yet the form of beauty has a place
 Within us ; and a sweet persuasive tongue
 To stir our hearts as when the world was young.
And there remains the human form and face
 Most marvelous ; this universal frame
 Alight with subtile flame,
Wherein the pulsing stars and planets roll
 Through the broad days and close mysterious
 nights ;
 And all those thoughts ineffable that make
 A solemn glory wake
 Above the wrecks and winds and scattered lights
Along the stormy headlands of the soul ;
 If we will leave the grating pipes and go
 Where lofty organs blow,
As maids green wreaths and bright-red berries bring
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing.

VIII.

Therefore give thanks, as seemly, on this morn
 For those who raised the world whereon they
 trod,

For Buddha and those elder priests of God,
For every godlike man wherever born ;
But most of all for this most human child,
Who pure and undefiled
Sustained the pains of birth and life and death
Not otherwise than as a very man
May do forever. Else of what avail
For us who faint and fail
Had been the thought that he this day began
In Bethlehem to draw his feeble breath ?
Therefore lift up your anthems and rejoice
With well accorded voice,
While maids green wreaths and bright-red berries
bring
And all the joyous youths antiphonally sing.

OUTGROWN.

THERE will be time or ever day is done ;
Remain thou with me but an hour yet ;
'T is scarcely morning for the peeping sun
Just shows his forehead, still the dew is wet
And on the slated roofs shines black as jet :—
So shall we talk together ere I fall
Back to the slough wherein, before we met,
My knees were wont contentedly to crawl,
And thou go upward whither giant voices call.

“Gone up among the mountains !” When they
come,

Thine old friends come to thy deserted place
At evening, as their custom is ; when dumb
The chamber lies as conscious of disgrace
Without retention of thy keen bright face ;
When they make question of the withered husk
Where the green corn is ; I shall pause a space

To gain my voice, then so reply—while dusk
Pervaded is with memories like subtle musk.

Then they will close again the opened door ;
And going down the narrow winding stair
To the long street, depart and come no more,
After the moment having ceased to care ;
I shall throw wide the window to the air,
The delicate caressing air of spring,
And question of the dusk how thou dost fare,
Gone on that lofty, lonely wandering—
Night after night, so close old recollections cling.

But I shall miss thee most as afternoon
In summer-time goes down toward eventide,
When silently there comes a creeping moon—
As a wan ghost ere yet the man has died
May seek his room, and, standing by his side,
Behold the evil laying waste his frame ;
Thy brows' insistence, not to be denied,
Will put my insufficiency to shame
With all the torpid earth and firmament aflame.

Gone up among the mountains ; and I stay
With the poor remnant in the city-street,

Whose coarser needs and uses fill my day.
But even thou hast told me : " It is sweet
Of summer evenings, when the parching heat
Is cooled a little by the falling dew,
To watch about the square the maidens meet
Beside the fountain while the youths go through,
Pacing along the dreamy twilight two by two ;

" Pleasant to watch the faces of the great,
Whose names the world at last has learned to
 know—
Poets and sculptors, rulers of the state,
Lovers of sad-eyed wisdom—all who go
Abroad at eve to wander to and fro ;
Pleasant to watch the current move along,
Glad for these active forms that live and grow,
Till from the contact with the human throng
There comes the uplift and the glad outbursting
 song."

And are these graceful pleasures not enough
To keep thee with us for a little while,
From ways as yet inviolate and rough ?
Has woman's face no power to beguile
Thy feet from passage of the steep defile

Whither the rocks arise like pointed cones?
Knows ease no witchery of languid smile,
That thou wilt leave her arms for broken stones
In deserts whitening with lost adventurers' bones?

Thy youth is like a richly jewelled cup
With ornaments embossed about the edge,
Wherewith a guest-friend stooping gathers up
Deep-colored wine, and, answering the pledge,
Kisses the imaged satyrs in the sedge,
The drowsy goddesses on cloudy heaps,
The sirens singing on an ocean ledge,
And his own features, as to lip each leaps,
Reflected from the wine's warm, ruddy-hearted
 deeps.

How could'st thou flourish in our narrow life,
Leaving the thoughts that with an eagle's wing
Beat the clear air to join a petty strife
Of sparrows? Or could'st thou, whose accents
 ring
With giant echoes, teach thy tongue to sing
A little song of kisses to a lute,
To please the idle mistress of a king;

Or be content to stay unstirred and mute,
Existing like a patient, burden-bearing brute ?

Hast thou considered all the ways of it,
When thou shalt have departed from the crowd,
And those companions who are wont to sit
Beside thee, when the forests, strong and proud
Before the rushing whirlwinds shall be bowed,
Where there shall come upon the startled soul,
Out of the wild horizon banked with cloud,
Some fiercely colored star that does not roll
Round the established centre of the stedfast pole ?

All will delight at first :—the shades that creep
Before the sunrise and its quick-paced awe,
The dim, delicious lapsing into sleep
When from each sense its images withdraw,
The dripping of the water in a thaw,
And on thy brow the wind's mouth smooth and
warm
Caressing thee in many a little flaw,
Will manifest a beauty and a form
As rarely breasted as a Northern winter's storm.

And yet I know that when along the West
Low-lying clouds be driven up in spume,

Across the drowning mountains' rounded breast ;
And all the depths of heaven with the gloom
Be strictly hid, and there be scarcely room
To breathe in for its pressure lying stark
Upon thee like the cover of a tomb,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor comet yields a spark,
Thou wilt be stumbling on the mountains in the dark.

I should go upward with thee to what good ?
While thou hast need of one whose heart is stout
Mine shudders on the border of a wood
At nightfall while the fireflies reel about—
Being perplexed and overwhelmed with doubt
Before the forest that I have to tread
In darkness with the light of youth gone out—
About my feet the graves of those long dead,
And in mine ears the weary words the Cynic said :

“ The silence is eternal, though ye hark,
What will it profit when there is no sound
A-ripple on the everlasting dark
Or mind fermenting in the wild profound ?
Have ye moles' eyes to search the heaven's
 mound ?
Then cease your questionings and take your ease ;

Live while with dignity your heads are crowned,
And at the last go forth because ye please,
Not like the cravens with short cries and trembling
knees."

I see the sad remainder of my days—
Disordered like a mourning woman's hair
Flung round her in a lustreless dim haze,
While she bewails the children that she bare
To death, and finding that the past more fair
Than the sad present will permit no rest,
Teaches her trembling fingers till they dare
Draw dagger from her girdle to her breast
And press it where her children have been fondly
pressed ;

When sound of winds arising in the night
Out of their caves between the dark and dawn
Deep hidden and the strangely scattered light
Of clouded stars and low on slumber's lawn
Flowering faces suddenly withdrawn—
But no voice making answer in a hymn,
As was thy custom, shall announce thee gone
To seek where on the world's far outer rim
Sits mystery with eyes unfathomably dim.

MOON-KISSED.

I.

WILT thou consider one who goes about
In heaviness of heart,
Whose soul is like a fire burning out
It does so crouch and start,
Whose blood infected with an unknown taint
Sends poison through the body's every part
And has no color left wherewith to paint
The flesh grown lean and faint?

Whereas of old beneath a smiling sun
He was content to lie,
Joyfully looking at the cloud-ships run
Across the tender sky—
Deeper than any tides that ever flowed
In fond attendance on the moon's round eye—
While singing of the sun's ascending road
Around the stars' abode.

So it was well with him until one night
 He walked the open leas
Between a hill and forest. On the right
 Far down among the trees,
 The clouded August moon was like a pearl
Taken by divers from the Southern seas
 To grace the blue-veined bosom of a girl
 And set her thoughts awirl.

All afternoon the languid winds had died
 Along the burning ground,
Until the midnight laid her cool bare side
 Against the verdure browned
 And scorched with heat. Then resting by a
 heap
Of wilted rose-leaves on a little mound
 He felt the earth's reviving pulses leap
 And straight way fell asleep.

Then crept the moon above the dubious wood
 Like some wild startled thing
Escaping from a net. Barefaced she stood,
 Trailing a broken wing
 Of sultry clouds—an angel thrust from bliss ;
Then bent her lips embittered with the sting

Of wasted times and powers used amiss
Upon him in a kiss.

All night he dreamed of stagnant land-locked seas
Between infertile coasts,
Haunted by dim lamenting memories
And thickly thronging ghosts
Of great emotions treacherously slain,
And vain regrets for alienated hosts
Of hope with voices falling like a strain
Of music on the wane.

II.

While openly the sun in heaven weaves
A charm to make men blind,
Far in a wood whose sickly twilight leaves
The hours undefined,
A dim mysterious water shuns the noon—
Like shrinking thoughts along a troubled mind—
But when the pulses of the daylight swoon,
It cherishes the moon.

And in the seasons when her dwindled face
Forlornly disappears ;

Some star, whose light has bored a hole in space
By laboring for years,
Looks through and at the bottom sees its flake
Of pure white fire, as the current veers
In a long flaw, so scattered as to make
The spirals of a snake.

The rainy Southwest wind with dripping hair
And lashes often blurs
Confusedly the beautiful bright air,
And with its breathing stirs
The drooping water-weeds of mouldy green
Beside the pool and whispers to the firs
Of men gone mad who o'er such waters lean
And never more are seen.

To walk where herbs with poisoned juices drip
In that malignant fen,
He has retired from the fellowship
Of lofty-hearted men,
Whose eyes burned clear by passion—like a
star
That out of clouds and storm has come again
Doubly to bless the watchers from afar—
Are clear as angels' are.

And there he wanders, all the summer's wealth
Of flower, fruit, and bud
Could not restore him to his former health
Or cleanse his tainted blood ;
He gives no heed though winter-time draws
near,
Autumnal winds go forth upon the flood,
And in their stations in the turning year
October's stars appear.

O Spirit of the bell-mouthed winter-wind
That rises from the place
Of sunset with the many colors thinned
Along its clear sharp face
To one fine amber—thou, whose ears have
heard
Somewhere about the world a whispered trace
Of old forgotten knowledge, speak one word
Of life, that he be stirred.

THE QUEEN.

THE Courtier had conspired with the King
Against the safety of the youthful Queen,
Regardless that a certain tender thing
Had been betwixt them while her soul was clean
Of courts and kings, or ever she had seen
The husband she had been compelled to wed
In the sweet season when her life was green ;
But now because his love for her was dead,
He listened to the words his shameless monarch
said.

That wizened King, whose face was like a scroll
Of yellow parchment whereupon the earth
Writing from year to year had set its whole
Of worldly wisdom—never from his birth
Upon those rigid lips had kindly mirth
Been seen to settle, nor a summer-day
Lighten those brows—now thinking that her
worth

Was withered and her power in decay,
Sought some sufficient cause for putting her away.

Then came the Courtier with the sweet old love,
And offered to betray by means of it
The girl whose voice had been the voice of dove
For tenderness to him, whose eyes had lit
His heart aforetime—that he might but sit
A little higher in the council-hall ;
And so the King and he prepared a pit
Whereinto her unwary feet might fall,
For she had none on whom she could for succor
call.

Then spoke the King : “What of that sombre
Lord
Whose face is made a byword, he who came
Out of the North with her and keepeth ward
Over her health, whose face is like a flame
Against us—if the Queen be put to shame ? ”
The Courtier answered : “ Safe beneath thine eye
Conduct him with the lords whose loyal aim
Is ours to the chamber where ye lie,
That if he speak in her defense, he surely die.”

Prepared the Courtier led her to the room,
It was late afternoon in early spring ;
And hidden by the curtains' heavy gloom
Her husband and his lords lay listening
For any careless word her love might fling
Out of her lips that witnesses should know
Her evilness to justify the King,
And through the quiet from the court below
Was heard a lover singing in the golden glow :—

“ There is no hope in singing
For song is always sad ;
There is no health in clinging
To that which maketh mad.”

The Courtier speaking overwhelmed the song :—
“ Hast thou a memory for what is done ;
Or have the carping crowds that thickly throng
Thy presence from the morn to midnight won
Thy kindness from the days of wind and sun
And pleasant hours in thy fatherland,
Where now the first frail flowers have begun
To blossom, where the heaven is as bland
As when we walked the open meadows hand in
hand ?

“ Has this sweet time no power to recall
The season and the place where we have met
So often, where the trees stood straight and tall
To guard thee, where the little leaves were wet
After a shower as a faint regret
Will linger on the lashes in a dew
After a weeping, where the violet
Was like a jewel in the moss that grew
As soft as velvet on the ways that spring made new?”

Behind the hangings he who followed her,
Starting to break concealment, was held fast
By those about him. Hearing not the stir,
She made a sign for silence as at last
The Courtier's calculated words had passed
Her patience ; but his voice, insistent, keen,
Still hurt her hearing, so she sadly cast
Her lashes down and let her forehead lean
Against her hand to give her tearful eyes a screen.

“ 'T is said that when an hour of old joy
Returns according to the circling year
Amid the present's petulant annoy,
Repentance for the past, the stealthy fear
Of the dim future's woe, a little cheer

Returns, although the hour be unknown—
Yea, so with those who have a woman's tear
And feeling ; but thou standest quite alone,
A thing of unremembering and senseless stone.

“ It is so sad that one who sitteth by,
Seeing another's tender love for him
Sicken like some plague-stricken thing and die,
Will—even when the fires have grown dim
In the soft eyes that such a death makes grim
With an unhealthy hatred—cast about
To strengthen unbelief and falsely trim
Older opinions to the newer doubt,
Denying that the love is gone completely out.

“ So I have doubted, thinking thou wast firm
Though women so inconstant are of mind
Their loves continue but a little term ;
And though I searched the world and might not
find
Another faithful, yet I thought to bind
Thy heart to mine. I know thee better now—
The little threads of loosened hair that wind
Disorderly about thy lifted brow
Are not as light and wanton of caress as thou.”

Her face was like a summer afternoon
Where heavily a sultry storm-cloud flies
With lurid lights and shadows ; and as soon
The voice of winds amid the leafage dies,
Affrighted that the angry lightnings rise
Along its frowning front and overhang
The forest ; so the menace of her eyes
Put him to silence. But a lute low rang,
For in the outer court the mournful lover sang :—

“ There is no use in living
A life that needs must die ;
There is no joy in giving
The gifts she putteth by.”

But suddenly the Queen began to speak
Like one who whispers to herself at night
What passed by day, then starts and lays her cheek
In a new cooler place, or turns the light
A little lower, nor discerns aright
What she is doing or what words she saith
For past and present mingle in her sight
Confusedly ; and so with deep-drawn breath
The Queen began to speak of him who sought her
death :—

“ I am ashamed ; yea, heartily ashamed
That such as he hath sinuously got
My only love away. O eyes enflamed
By mourning under eyelids dry and hot
With the restraint of tears, ye sadly blot
The beauty of the world these latter days,
Where is your lustre now—‘ your tangled knot
Of starlight ’ or ‘ your stolen milky ways ’ ?
Alas ! I understood so ill his courtly praise.

“ He saith I have no feeling. He is wrong
For I have felt great meanings cross the spring
At nightfall where the brooding hills prolong
The purple dusk with overspreading wing
Of shadow when the lonely places ring
With the strange treble voices that arise
Out of the marshes’ mist and wildly sing
Of baffled struggling crowds and broken cries
And the great stedfast underhope that never dies.

“ Then I have felt his love about my heart,
Making it mystically fair and sweet
As it were consecrate and set apart.
On the high hills the winter’s cold white feet

Or the brown palms of summer moist with heat
Took on a perfect beauty, for love's soul
Had made its dwelling with the incomplete—
So the rich wine above an earthen bowl
Scatters its prisoned sunlight in an aureole.

“ It took but little time for gloom to come
After the first awaking of distrust,
As at the touch of Fall the birds are dumb
Or on a cold premonitory gust
Go winging southward ; like the dull red rust
Dimming a sword, discolored are the trees ;
The ground is covered with a frosted crust,
The lively streams go haltingly and freeze,
While brutal winds are loosed upon the bare salt
seas ;

“ So my delight left singing and was still ;
Then turned away, departing down the wind
Dismayed at his unkindness, at the chill
Of his changed temper ; so my life was thinned
Of gracious fruit because his season sinned
Against the promise of the opening bud ;
So stiffened up—although my ears are dinned

With the free rolling of the human flood
And climbing tide of passion—is my straitened
blood.

“Therefore I know how stern is winter’s strength
Descending from the bitter North to go
About the land through all its breadth and
length ;
By day the sick, enfeebled sun leans low
Across a waste horizon bleak with snow,
Which stretches onward, taciturn and white,
To the great arctic ocean chafing slow
Against its sides beneath a scanty light ;
And gaunt Orion occupies the iron night.

“Through the high walks of heaven star with
star
In music moves though man has lost the sense
Of spiritual hearing, though there are
Some evil planets that have fallen thence
To err forever where the night is dense
With lower fogs corruptible, and numb
With the black frost of sunless depths, intense
Beyond imagining, where deaf and dumb
In everlasting banishment they go and come.”

She paused a moment, "Yet I will not think,
Because my star is fallen and must hang
For its great sin hereafter on the brink
Of inharmonious chaos whence it sprang,
That all are evil." Thin and fretful rang
The high-strung lute from where the lover paced
The unfrequented court and sadly sang
While the last colors of the sunset traced
Intricate patterns on the twilight's clouded waste :—

"No break will cross her laughter
When I am carried by ;
Nor will she ask thereafter
The reason that I die."

He ceased. Between the water and the wood
The spirits of the night began to rise
And walk the world ; the misty mountains stood
Shouldering with the clouds ; the stars' sharp eyes
Peered cautiously about like subtle spies
Watching an enemy ; the winds awoke
And called to one another through the skies,
With clear shrill voices ; then the Courtiers broke
From their concealment, and the King's Adviser
spoke :

“We have been much concerned, your Majesty,
Because this woman, whom you took to wife,
Has seemed to us for years the thing you see.
But who would be so rash as stir up strife
On a mere thought, or sacrifice a life
For a report ; yet if he see one lie
Lurkingly fingering a naked knife
Beside the roadway till the King pass by,
Would not accuse him ? Therefore let this woman
die.”

The King made answer as had been arranged :—
“Since I am very helpless, being old,
The faces of the world toward me have changed,
And their lips flatter, while their hearts are cold
With calculation. Who can hardly hold
The sceptre, can he penetrate the breast
And know the secret hidden in its fold ?
I am so weak and foolish, and oppressed
With leaden years, my Lords ; advise me for the
best.”

Then spoke the Councillor who spoke before :
“Nay, let your Highness have no heart-sick
doubt ;

We keep the old allegiance that we swore
To cherish till our moisture be sucked out
By parching death's extremity of drought,
And we lie arid like a sun-burned land :
But as for these two, foremost in the rout
And rabble of disgrace and shame, command
That they be given over to the hangman's hand."

There was a sudden momentary calm,
For the long dusk had deepened till the dark
Fell like the touch of aromatic balm
Oozing reluctant from a tree's bruised bark
Over old gashes. Then a spiteful spark
Worried the silver sconces into light,
Staring and unabashed, where all might mark,
The Courtier's countenance grown ridged and
white,
Like a sick fear that rises in the coward night.

And with his voice a-tremble like a drop
Of water that is settling toward its fall,
With writhing lips that tried in vain to stop
Their fearful tremors, he began to call
Upon the Councillors : " What mean ye all ?
Are ye in earnest haply ? Will ye cheat

My service of preferment ? Shall I crawl
Deathward and leave existence incomplete ? ”
He groaned and made as though to grovel at their
feet.

The Northern Lord had stood like one that
dreams
Of calm, and waking finds that ills increase,
Quiet but for the working of the seams
And wrinkles in the face that will not cease
Twitching ; but now his tongue was loosened :
“ Peace,
Thou fool ! The end is thy contrivance. Keep
To thy concerns ; the things of life release
To such as shall have space to laugh and weep
When thou art lying heavy with impassive sleep.

“ For thou hast reached the limit of the world—
The ever-shifting line of crumbling capes
And wrinkled skies and shrivelled waters hurled
And huddled into one ; where fleshless shapes,
Paddling the thick and clotted dark that drapes
The imminent end, are keen to suck thy blood
And knead thy body—like the skins of grapes

Thrown from the vat and trodden with the
mud
Into the formless substance of the restless flood.

“ When thou art summoned by another name ;
And taking up the body long disused,
Thou goest with a sudden sense of shame
Because the neck of it is thwart and bruised,
And standest in the strange new morn confused;
What wilt thou answer to be reconciled
To God whose patience thou hast so abused,
To her whom thou hast wilfully beguiled
When she was little other than a helpless child ?

“ Life touches you but lightly in the South
And ye are glad at trifles ; for the earth
Laughs with you, and the sunlight, while the
mouth
Of ocean ripples with indulgent mirth,
But in the North we are austere from birth ;
The unattainable high heaven mocks
At our endeavor, and the little worth
Of human effort frets us till life locks
Our passions into silences like ice-ribbed rocks.

“ Because her face was like a perfect plant
Set in a Northern garden often tossed
And rumpled by the winds, where buds are scant
Of fruit or flower, and their life is lost
In one short night by reason of the frost ;
Where for the most part of the year the streams
Are thick with icicles and trees are mossed
But little from the sun so thin its beams—
She grew to be the single flower of my dreams.

“ The dream is gone now. On the hill the wind
Sucks like a whirlpool ; where the moon should
bloom
A rose in heaven—see, the light is thinned
To a dull yellow, for the fogs consume
The edges of the evening ; in the room
Of the star-flowers are the withered clouds,
The exhalation and suspended fume
Out of the tempest’s nostrils ; snow enshrouds
The hillside, and the flakes are blown about in
crowds.

“ The sweet low place wherein she sat half-hid
Behind her father’s chair, and whence she rose
To give his guests a welcome—as she did

Before thy fatal coming—never knows.
The pressure of her shoulder in repose
Against its carving now ; across the floor
Her feet advance no longer at the close
Of evening, and the threshold of the door
That she has crossed so often feels her step no
more.

“ These are the things that thou must answer for.
In thy blind riding to the North at first
Out of the storm arose no forms of war
Or sad self-conscious struggle that outburst
To warn thee off ? Why wentest thou, accursed
Like him by whom offenses come, astray
To us with all the world to choose from—worst
Of all bad paths ? Hadst thou been cast away
It had been better for thee in the final day.

“ While lisping to her ears some tender thing,
Thou plottedest in that crooked mind of thine
How thou mightst make a marriage for thy King
To thy advantage, should his thought incline
To widen out his kingdom and combine
Two parted interests. Since there were none
To stand between the girl and thy design,

After her father and the King were won,
Ye wrought upon her weakness till the sin was done.

“While yet her father’s power in the North,
Because of which the marriage had been made,
Waxed like a tree and thrust its branches forth
Into the South as though to overshadow
And keep it from the sun, respect was paid
To the Queen’s walk and not too strict regard.
This altered as his green began to fade
In the sear Autumn of his age, when marred
With frost the leafage of his tree turned dry and
hard.

“After he died I looked for some such end ;
And nightly when the sun enfeebled sank
To westward, when the trees began to bend
Under the rising of the wind, and dank
The fog was on the stagnant river-bank,
And light departed from the mountain-top ;
I questioned of the swiftly marching rank
And vanward of our days when dark would drop
And all the going forward of the journey stop.

“Queen once and Queen forever, let me stoop
Over thy hand and seal my faith thereon,

Inalterable though the heavens droop
And wither from their places, though the sun
Reels in his chambers and our day is done
About its noontide. Leave thy fingers so
In my hand's hollow ; let the warm blood run
With mine a little longer, for I know
That when I loose thy hand, I surely let life go.

“Listen ! The multitudinous quick feet
Of those that shall come after in our stead
With hollow sound tumultuously beat,
Crowding behind us with persistent tread.
Let us go, therefore, whither we are led,
And leaning close as friends lean breast to breast
Sit and hold quiet converse with the dead
In the still pastures of the ample West,
Where all the tired stars and winds lie down to rest.”

A certain Page—who had been standing by
And on the outskirts of the group unseen
Or else unheeded, when the talk was high,
Listened intently, letting his ear lean
Toward each who spoke but always on the
Queen

Fixing his eyes as though he wished to wear
Her face in memory—with dagger keen
Though needle-slender such as pages bear
Assailed the Courtier, who fell clutching at the air,

“And this is lest he hang not,” said the Page.
Whereat a silence thicker than all speech
Choked up the room while ashen-pallid rage
Flecked white the Councillors’ thin lips and each
Stared at his neighbor’s face as on a beach
Blankly the few survivors of a wreck,
For they would yet have put him out of reach,
Being unwilling gallows-birds should peck
A Courtier’s body dangling by its broken neck.

“Take them away whom she hath so bewitched
With her milk face,” the King said. “Lest she feel
Lonely in death,” his nervous fingers twitched
Eager to play the torturer and reel
Her body into thread, “before death seal
Her eyes forever, in the market-place
Let the pale boy be broken on the wheel,
That she may see.”—All passed and left no trace
Of whirlwind save the body lying on its face.

Then came two men and bore the Courtier out ;
And having laid the sorely wounded man
Upon his bed, they straightway turned about
And left him there—while many hours ran,
Unconscious. But at midnight he began
To ask strange questions, erring in his mind,
And mumbled to the King of this last plan
For which he perished—as he groped to find
Some stay amid the darkness for his eyes were
blind.

And afterwards a light uneasy sleep
And dreams came over him, wherein he spoke
Fragments of former talk and seemed to keep
Old trysts with her whom he betrayed and stroke
Her hair and call her love-names till he woke
Choking with death and pitifully cried
To her for pardon. So ere morning broke,
In that dark hour when the daily tide
Of human life is at its lowest ebb, he died.

The mystical veiled light that runs before,
Prophetic of the quickly coming dawn,
Was pulsing high in heaven when they bore
The three to death. Her look was like a lawn

Impassive under snow ; but thwart and drawn
Like a blurred shadow cast by candle-light,
The face that followed, for the Page had gone
To execution many times that night,
And being young his cheek was womanish and
white.

And seeing that he trembled overmuch
The Northern Lord had tried to steady him
Till the Queen came and healed him with a
touch ;
Then he went bravely from the scaffold's rim
To the gaunt wheel ; and mangled chord and
limb
Hung limp and lax. The crowd's hoarse voices
crooned
Like witches in her ears. " Their faces swim
Bewilderingly," she murmured. Half she
swooned
While all the dawning East was one long crimson
wound.

Because she staggered, being very weak,
He guarded her against the headsman's care,
And gently from her sunken bloodless cheek

And from her neck's white nape, to leave it bare
As the need was, he put her rumpled hair.
Kneeling she caught his hand. "Be not afraid,"
He said, "I follow." While a whispered prayer
Hallowed her lips, a sudden sign he made
To strike her quickly ; so she perished as she
prayed.

Calmly he knelt and gave the headsmen charge
That they should wait the spreading of his
hands
Before the axe bit through and set at large
The body's occupant. Across the lands
Of life the sunlight lay in broad, bright bands ;
Within, forgotten faces newly found
Gibbered like corpses floating to the sands
Of a waste sea wherein of old they drowned :—
Then rolled his severed head upon the senseless
ground.

'This was the way of it—no doubt forgot—
For I have written, stating nought amiss
Or hastily, the truth that alters not.
So I bear witness. Later breaths shall hiss

Shrilly against the guilty, though of this
The poet made a song of sickly sighs
And lawless loves to please the lips that kiss
Lightly about the court—his words are lies :
I saw the calm bright brow above her steady eyes

A DEAD SOUL.

WHAT costly sacrifice, what fair parade
Of gifts, what scent of incense shall we bring
To lift our hearts since we no longer sing
Those gracious songs of daily life we made
When we were young together, oh, my friend?
For we are troubled that our tongues are still,
That we no longer bend
Our footsteps toward our lofty solemn hill.

Do you remember where we used to walk?
There was a little quiet water lay
Amid the circling grass beside the way
Whither we went of afternoons to talk
And watch some narrow corner of the sky
Brokenly mirrored by the ripples' flow
As they went gliding by—
Until the night fell and we rose to go.

What matter that we had no warm-hued wine,
Or golden jewels, while the breaking morn
Was ruddy, and the sunlight on the corn
Lay yellow till day's gradual decline,
Ushering in the pensive eventide,
Gave us new beauties that we might adore
When planets side by side
In stately dance went down the heaven's floor?

And so for years we lived there satisfied,
Till once as it grew Fall and in the plain
Below us had been harvested the grain
And on the wooded ways the plants had died ;
Your purpose faded from your heart ; you said
" Alas ! enough of grandeur, I am sad ;
Come, join the garlanded
Whose careless lives are prosperous and glad."

Like one who goes to see the setting sun ;
And having watched it slowly sink, then fall
Rapidly out of sight behind the wall
Of the horizon—though the day is done—
Still strains his eyes upon the empty place
With dim expectancy of some strange thing ;

I looked upon your face,
Then fell to idly, sadly wondering ;—

You with a soul like that of some sweet saint
Whose passion is the servant of his thought—
What strange outrageous battle had been fought
Within your depths before your strength was faint
Enough to yield the conflict with a moan ?
Your voice broke on the solitude again,
“We are too much alone ;
Come, let us go among our fellow-men.”

So we arose from where we sat and went
Down from the hilltop and the slopes were gray
Already in the early fading day ;
But you strode cheerfully as quite content
With the new venture ; I was dumb with doubt
Of what might hap. Then died the sunset's blush,
The evening star came out,
And we went on into the deepening hush.

The road we travelled seemed unreal to me ;
There came a strange wan moon and lagged behind,
Casting fantastic shapes ; I could not find

A star I knew in all the starry sea.

So the night passed ; and when the morning
came

Benignantly above the distant crest

Of our old hill, the flame

Lapped with its tongues a city in the West ;

Builted of marble wonderfully fair,

Sculptured with faces of strange men and beasts—

The heathen gods that sat at frozen feasts

Forever raising chiselled cups in air

But never drinking ; heroes stood arow

Beneath the gods, then images of kings,

And farther yet below

The living in the streets did paltry things.

For all the people kept a holiday

In that white city—if such day can be

Plucked from continual festivity—

And with a great procession made display ;

First passed their priests with long white beard
and hair ;

Their venerable men ; then those who played

On pipes and those who bare

The beautiful, the gods their hands had made :

And following were rose-flushed cheeks of girls
Unto whose tender shoulders lightly clung
Their floating robes, upon whose bosoms hung
The waving masses of their loosened curls ;
While close behind them—beautiful and young
Came white-robed manhood, strong and lithe of
limb,
Of ready-witted tongue
Breaking at times into a joyful hymn.

The multitude fell in and we were led
Into a temple, where, as in a dream,
We watched them set before us yellow cream
And golden butter, ruddy wine, white bread
And mellow fruits, whereon we feasted, cheered
By nourishment, and when the day was grown
To eve and night appeared
They brought a harp of clear melodious tone,

Whereto each sang in turn a hollow song ;
But when it came to me, I put it by,
Having no words wherewith to satisfy
The mood of this fair, shallow-hearted throng ;
And you, who lusted for its light applause,
Stretched out your hand unheeded, for the feast

Was finished and a pause
Was on the singing and the mirth had ceased.

It was in that dark hour when the cocks
Impatient of the dawn begin to crow,
That all the multitude swayed to and fro
By wrath arose and cried : " This stranger mocks
Our sacred festival ; gray-faced and grim
He views our mirth ; he scorns our gods no doubt-
Away, away with him ! "
And they laid hands on me and thrust me out.

Day after day beside the city-gate,
Wrapped in a sad-hued cloak, low in the dust
I sit and croon our songs, for still I trust
In your nobility. And here I wait
Against your coming—you will come, I know,
To take my hand when your delusion rolls
Away, and we shall go
Together from the city of dead souls.

THE DILETTANTE ON SHADOWS.

Now I will put aside my flute, and talk
 Since you desire it.
Will it disturb you, if I rise and walk
 Backward and forward thus—or shall I sit ?
 I 'm used to err. My plyaing is not fit
 For your attention—destitute of grace,
A scrawny mullen-stalk
 Is always out of place.

Yes, they are mine—those papers that exhume
 The long forgotten day ;
And I am he who carved upon the tomb
 The angel with the eyes that bless—you say ;
 And mine those poems—you will have it—sway
 Men's souls ; the lofty statue in the square
Which fouling damp and gloom
 At night leave longest bare.

“How did you make performance of your task
So eminently good,
Since man does only one thing well?” you ask.
My works are totally misunderstood,
Are insufficient, vain as womanhood
Without maternity ; they deal in lies
And leave the twisted mask
On Life’s fair brow and eyes.

Though of my arrows some have glanced aside
Through feebleness, some missed
The target utterly, some flying wide
Injured my fellows who would fain assist,
I’ll tell you how they happened to exist
At all and to be hurtled from the bow—
But you belike will chide
To hear what you would know ;

For talk of these inadequate things done
At such times as I had
A hope that from the changing might be won
A stable rest whereof we should be glad,
May lead me into words uncouth and sad,
Since it is very dismal in the mind—

You ask me to go on ?

I thank you, you are kind.

In boyhood, when the welcome dark had shut

About the earth's broad face,

Leaving the growing fancies free to strut,

An hour as pleased them best at their own pace

Hither and thither in their narrow place ;

They often wondered, " In another's eyes
What figure does he cut,

He from whose brain we rise ? "

Then I admired man far more than now—

Through ignorance ? Perchance—

His careful and deliberating brow

To check the eager eyes' impatient glance

That points the face as steel will point a lance,

The legs' straight columns bearing up the trunk
That hidden powers endow

With fires deeply sunk.

So reverencing these I wished to be

To such an one as hit

My fancy even as he was to me.

And later when the flaring lamps were lit,

I walked about to watch my shadow flit
 Along the halls and flutter like your fan—
Excitedly to see
 If I were yet a man.

These are the shadows of the growing boy,
 Who vaguely pondering
Sees in the future powers to enjoy
 Activity of life—the only thing
 Without a question worth accomplishing,
 And never doubts the scope the years will give
Fittingly to employ
 His strength and duly live.

But when I grew to manhood, having found
 In that transparent dawn
That chances for my deeds did not abound
 And all the poignancy of life was gone,
 As in the noon the dew deserts a lawn ;
 Straightway upon the intellect I bent
My search for some sure ground
 Whereon to be content.

“ Seeing that thought is powerful,” I said,
 “ And there is little time

Before I shall be put among the dead,
I will employ the powers of my prime
To lift another whither I shall climb."
So came my volumes of philosophy—
Not quite as widely read
As they deserve to be.

Then I reflected : " Is this human like,
About men as they are ?
O ignorant as some restricted tike
Who by a passionless, transcendent star
He noticed in the firmament afar
Describes the sputter of a match's tip
Which he is wont to strike
To light his tallow dip."

Then digging for the skeletons of men
I sought an elder age,
And having clad it in its rags again,
Set it to mime upon the mimic stage
That rises dimly from a printed page ;
And there the shadows of a time o'erthrown,
Distorted by my pen,
Unheeded made their moan.

But being even then dissatisfied,
 Because the human heart
Was yet untouched in all that I had tried,
 And human passions for the greater part
 Were unregarded, I made trial of art,
 Testing the beautiful to find some gain
In joy to set aside
 My disappointing pain.

And I became a rhymers ; as my skill
 With exercise increased,
The old enjoyments that were wont to fill
 My lonely hours gradually ceased
 To please ; no longer poets spread the feast
 Of chosen words. So lest my soul should
 starve,
In the first creeping chill
 Of age I learned to carve.

These are the flat projections of man's mind—
 The shadows of a life
He would be glad to live but can not find,
 The vain expressions of an inward strife,
 Probing, forever probing with its knife
 To loose the secrets hidden at the core,

To cut away the rind
From seeds unveiled before.

These are my immortality, it seems,
Which strings along that shelf
With all its volumes—phantasies and dreams,
Muddling some facts—I never wrote for pelf,
At least that justice have I done myself ;
Two statues, things I scarcely tried, seem best—
Yes, better than the reams
Of poems and the rest.

Undoubtedly because I cannot judge
The merit of such work,
I praise what might be done by any drudge,
Well, let it pass ; yet will suspicion lurk
Along the edges of a dream when murk
Befouls my sight ; had I been given wings
Nor been compelled to trudge,
I had done wondrous things.

Now I am grown so old I cannot feel ;
But even on an earth
Where disappointment biting at its heel
Poisons endeavor from its very birth,

Seems it not ill—this everlasting dearth
Of satisfaction for the urgent needs—
Or is it but a steel
That rooteth out the weeds?

These divers things are shadows of one man
And therefore cause surprise ;
As if—to modify a prior plan—
Some morning fifty brilliant suns should rise,
He who had never watched the old with eyes
Of awe, would be the one to marvel most
Although the lone sun ran
As strangely as the host.

But having failed as every man must fail,
I look abroad for hope,
And on the world I see strange shapes as pale
As those among which I am wont to grope
Appear to others.—Suns arise and slope
Obscurely until men of yesterday
Grow pitifully frail
With shadowy decay.

And most of all these things I see around
To my inspection seem

To be without coherence—no one bound
Unto the next ; as when a rhythmic stream
Low-rippling mixes with an idler's dream,
He hears but lightly laughing girls rejoice,
Unnoting in the sound
The waves' incessant voice.

Therefore like one who looks upon the things
That I have done, with doubt
That he who wrote the metaphysic, sings
And he who sang, chisels the figures out
Of marble—that one man can turn about
Until his figure takes so many shapes ;
And if conviction brings
New wonder, stands and gapes :

Or like a dog that while his lord for cold
Goes walking to and fro
Before a fire, wondering—though old
In that man's service—what strange figures go
Along the wall, too ignorant to know
That shadow, barks till tired, then lies curled
To sleep :—so I behold
God's shadow on the world.

While in the sunset's narrow golden rim
 The opal of the West
Fills with great shadows, mystically dim
 And undefined through that opaque white breast
 On whose expanse the colors never rest
 But move and mingle like the forms of sleep :—
I wait to cross its brim
 And therein wander deep.

YOUTH DEAD.

ONE who has loved the summer and has sung
Its praise in sunny meadows, is not dumb
When winter-time is come,
But by the fire with his harp new strung
Sits low and sings a retrospective song
Of the dead gladness. Though his hands are
numb
With frequent draughts that throng
The gusty hall, he joins to his sweet tongue
Such well concerted chords in sad complaint
As make the smart of absence tolerably faint.

So I beside the body of my dead,
Weaving my sorrow into some sad hymn,
Will mourn to-night, while dim
The lights are burning at his feet and head,
While the white cloth is mercifully drawn

Over the empty hand and stiffened limb ;—
But when the star-eyed dawn
Awakes and standing o'er me by the bed
Points with her finger to the newer need,
I will arise and follow wheresoe'er she lead.

O Messengers between the soul and sense,
Whose agile wings ascend the lightning's slope,
While we in darkness grope
And call thy truth a lie in truth's defence ;
Whose feet are steady on the clouds to go
Or penetrate the deeps, whose broad free
scope
Includes the high and low
And knows them part of one, why went ye hence
And left me comfortless when ye had brought
My well-beloved home—O Sons of lyric thought ?

Dead ! and he went through such a weary way.
He has gone deeper than the land of dreams
With all its pleasant streams ;
For as his spirit passed the other day
Through fields of slumber to the brazen
gate,

Before whose dense impenetrable beams,
The dying stand and wait,
Since farther one who liveth can not stray—
As he stood there amid death's motley crew,
Lo, the accursed gate swung wide and let him
through.

When the swift Messengers, who came to bear
The tidings to my startled ears, had flown
And I remained alone
In the fast-falling night, yet unaware
How deep and irretrievable my loss,
Thinking, since all the truth was not yet known,
He had but gone across
Sleep's verge and been delayed, I sought him
there ;
But having caught no glimpse of that dear face,
Late the next morn I left the miserable place.

Then I made search for him about the world :
On distant uplands where he loved to roam
Beneath the smiling dome
Of heaven when the little clouds lie curled
Along the broad horizon's verge to rest

After their travels ; by the scattered foam
 Around the ocean's breast,
The fringe wherewith the clothing shore is purled ;
On barren heights, in dells where flowers grow,
In silent places whither he was wont to go ;

Then where he walked for joy of human speech—
 Either in public market-place and street,
 Or some secure retreat
Out of the ken of prying eyes and reach
 Of jarring tongues and over-curious ears,
Where he and his few friends rejoiced to meet
 With talk of what the years,
The nimble-footed years would bring to each :
But in the evening I returned forespent,
Having inquired vainly for him as I went.

After the rose-flush on the heaven's cheek
 Had crossed it following the sunken sun,
 When slowly one by one
The stars came out above the last red streak ;
 I called to me the Messengers and asked,
 “ How know ye that his pleasant life is done,
 Since all day long ye basked

Where through the soil a spring's cool waters
leak
And sunbeams trickle down some leafy tree
Far in the solitude ? " They answered, " Come and
see."

So I arose and let them go before
Along the highway from the mountain's crown
Slow-winding to the town,
Till in a lonely street we reached a door,
Through which they led me to a darkened
room,
Wherein the body lay. Then I went down
Beside him in the gloom
Upon my knees, and raised him from the floor
And named him with the old familiar word
We used in childhood ; but his features never
stirred.

I sang to him of portents, of wild stars
And comets burning in the night's abyss,
Of women's lips that kiss
Their lovers, and the riding to the wars
To victory ; or else the last mischance
Of battle, and the arrows' sting and hiss,

The shadowy advance
Of death upon the wounded when the jars
Of conflict cease and dark conceals the field ;
The bearing back the body on the broken shield.

But yet he stirred not. Then I sang of peace :-
The time when lambs lie bleating in the fold,
When winter's rigid cold
Compels the overbearing wars to cease,
When maidens all arow along the wall
Clad in bright garments wrought with living
gold
Adorn the sombre hall,
Like flowers, and the joys of life increase
And move responsive to the quickened beat
Of music and the rhythmic sound of dancing feet

When I perceived no color on his lips
Nor any light of understanding rise
Within his darkened eyes,
And that his face was like a field when slips
Out of the clouds the inexpressive snow
Hour by hour till all verdure lies
Inanimate below,
And like thin icicles the finger-tips

That I was holding ; then I knew that death
Had snatched my unsuspecting youth's impulsive
 breath.

I raised my eyes and recognized the place
 As that where I had seen him last alive,
 When one about to wive
Had made a feast and bidden us. With face
 Of smiling holiday and heart as light
 As is becoming unto those who thrive,
 Through the enchanted night
My youth had gone and bent his ear to trace
Among the sounds along the forest-side
A wedding-song for fitly honoring the bride.

Where he had sung to please her what the brooks,
 The winds, the peepers and the rustling trees
 Sing all night long to please
The tender mating birds in starlit nooks,
 Where she had listened, sitting with her
 kin,
Her bended elbow resting on her knees
 And underneath her chin
Her hollowed hand and let her loving looks

Flutter between her husband and the ground—
There he lay dead, his forehead still with flowers
crowned.

But I had missed him first on my return,
We came together but I went alone
Beneath a sky wind-blown
And bluish like exhausted veins that yearn
For newer currents of refreshed blood ;
In fields the fragrance of the hay new-mown
Or roses just in bud,
Or deeper yet the soft damp smell of fern
Had not aroused me from a sullen doubt,
A sense as of a great light suddenly gone out.

The Messengers concealed him with my cloak
And bore him forth. 'T was summer, and the
dust,
Burned brown as iron-rust,
Fretted our throats and nostrils like a smoke.
Now and again the sultry clouds were split
By lightning or a meteor was thrust
Across the waste and lit
By its own motion. As we went none spoke

Until the bearers raised a chant to cheer
Their journey when the hill's laborious slopes drew
near :

“ All men are born to sorrow. Lift along
The burden for to-morrow We may weep,
But now the road is steep
Nor will much lamentation Make us strong ;
Come, therefore, let us borrow Strength of
mirth ;
So with his approbation We shall keep
His memory on earth
Nor in our lowly station Do him wrong,
Where now he dwells in honor with the hosts
Of spirits in the country of unbodied ghosts.

“ There are the days and hours Yet unborn,
And other seasons' flowers With their fruit,
The future's music mute
And hidden in the hollow Of its horn ;
There dwell the mighty powers That have
been,
The kings that death makes follow In his suite,
Alas ! no longer seen,

Departed like a swallow Through the morn :
Nor do the people of that country weep,
But sit in pensive quiet as of dreamy sleep."

And so the Messengers have brought him home,
Arranged the candles, laid a linen cloth
Like drowning ocean-froth
Above him, placed a bit of honey-comb
To draw away the insects of the night
And bidden me farewell. A great gray moth,
More tempted by the light
Than by the ordered sweet, begins to roam
About the sconces, hideous as death
Or the corruption gendered by its sickly breath.

And early in the morning, while the mist
Still wreathes the marshes, some will dig a
grave ;
And when the dawn's red wave
Runs up the sky and all the heights are kissed
And rosy of a sudden, they will take
The corpse away and with pure water lave
Its frozen limbs and make
All ready. Then the funeral will twist

Snakelike along the upward-winding track
And what the earth has given shall be taken back.

No longer will he be interpreting
To my intelligence the shadows cast
From out the cloudy vast
Of mysteries that all unordered ring
My life about but get beyond my view
Now that his ministry is overpast ;
No longer will it do
To lie contented in the sun and sing
But for the song's sake. Yea, he needs must go
That manhood may to higher understanding grow.

For though my youth is quiet, now no growth
Disturbs his languid hours, I must range
Until the final change
Obstructs with unimaginable sloth
At least the further progress of the flesh ;
But whether from the soul it will estrange
The body, as they thresh
Its wrappings from the grain, or whether both
Are of a single nature and shall burn
By the slow fire of decay—I am to learn.

THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL.

I. SPRING-SONG.

The World and the Flesh.

THE leaves arise along the Spring,
Whose soul is like the soul of wine
Or fire wonderfully fine ;
Its winds sound like the fingered string
Of some sweet instrument, whose ring
Accompanies while women sing
Of love the delicate design ;
And singing gayly intertwine
The flowers and their flowing hair.
At noon and eve the birds find tongue,
And haste to woo while they are young
The mates to whom their songs are sung ;
The blossom lays its bosom bare

To the caresses of the air,
While lusty joy with bended hips
Offers to youth her smiling lips.

The World.

As into flood thy passions break
And pouring over boyhood's brim
Put vigor into every limb,
Arise and bid thy powers wake.
Thereby live largely, glad to take
Or pain or pleasure so they make
Thy life no candle blurred and dim
That gutters o'er its narrow rim
Or drowns itself with hindered flow ;
But rather be the rose's flame
That glows unheeding praise or blame,
Unskilled to question whence it came
Or whither it at last shall go
Or whether it exist or no ;—
Now that thy petals are uncurled,
Put forth a thorn to prick the world.

The Flesh.

As thou hast senses, so enjoy.
Fret not because of some lost height,

But gratify thine appetite
 To save thy body from annoy ;
 Yet lest these grosser things destroy
 Thy keenness, fail not to employ
 The finer forms of rare delight—
 The poet's sound, the sculptor's sight—
 For thine enjoyment. Thou art fit
 As well as they to hear and see,
 Rounding thy life more perfectly
 Since thou art unrestrained and free ;
 While they are driven by a bit
 One way and may not swerve from it.
 So shall thy sympathies be wide
 Touching mankind on every side.

II. WINTER-SONG.

The Devil.

The sun has lost his light and heat ;
 Above the heavy clouds his head
 Shows dimly. So when one is dead,
 Wrapt from the shoulders to the feet
 And tangled in his winding-sheet,
 They set him forth for men to greet
 Before the services are read
 And the last solemn words are said.

Then those few friends who stand about
The body in the darkened place
Where they have set that hollow case,
From gazing on the vacant face
Begin to feel a growing doubt
And try to spell its meaning out :—
Whatever way your footsteps tend
Death lies in waiting at the end.

Make heaviness ; yea, weep and wail ;
Look not upon the moon or sun
For weariness of deeds undone
Since all a life's incentives fail
When ruddy-hearted deeds grow pale
And thoughts are shown of no avail.
What profits thee this triumph won,
That ecstasy conceived by none
Save thee whose strength it helped to waste ?
Each effort leaves thee weaker. Pull
About thee thy soft wrap of wool,
Yet higher, lest thine eyes be full
Of pleasures that thou durst not taste
To urge thy days to greater haste ;
From this dark place where thou hast stood
Take forth distrust of any good.

THE ADVENTURER.

I go to-morrow morning, and the light
Of that eventful day will dawn too soon ;
Give me thy hand and let us walk to-night,
For on the lonely mountain wakes the moon
Beyond the city, while behind the dune
The restless winds are stirring on the sea
And the pent ocean struggles to be free.

I have heard wonders of the outer world,
Told by such seamen as returned to die
Here in their birthplace, when the fire curled
Around the logs and wintry was the sky
In the long evenings, and the winds were high—
Marvellous stories, but I shall not find
A fairer city than I leave behind.

It lies recumbent at the river's mouth,
Between the mountain and the sandy shore,

Exposed a little to the placid South,
Facing the level sunset and its store
Of visionary joys. The waters pour
Twice daily from the sea, and on the tide
Strange wreck and drift of foreign vessels ride.

Therefore the longings of the sea are strong
Over my nature. While the city sleeps,
I lie and listen to the Sirens' song
Calling across the quicksands to the deeps ;
All day I watch the current as it creeps
Under the sliding keels, and swirls and slips
In furrows from the tall sea-going ships.

I shall go down the harbor as the flood
Begins to ebb and leave the marshes bare,
Past hulking wrecks protruding from the mud,
Gnawed and corroded by the sharp salt air ;
Just at tide-turning, if the wind holds fair,
The ship will venture, gliding like a ghost,
Down the long channel to the changing coast.

And haply after many days are done,
In some low morning when a maiden's cheek
Would scarcely roughen with the wind and sun,

I shall descry the coast-line that I seek
Ribbing the long horizon like a streak
Of vapor after sunset in the West ;
And we shall furl the swollen sails and rest.

Then I shall mingle with another race
Of stronger natures, and the childish past
Will be forgotten—even to the place
Where I embarked, the sea, the reeling mast,
The memorable voyage—till I last
Alter and filling out my measure grow
Strange to myself and all the long ago.

Or it may happen that great storms will cross
My purposed courses, or the headwinds shift
From point to point, while helplessly we toss
And never reach the longed-for land or lift
Our faces from the sea, but drive and drift
Bearing our memories like half-healed scars
Down the slant ocean to the streaming stars.

We may be driven into Northern straits
Where the half-frozen deep is dark and dense ;
Or sailing Southward when the storm abates,
May lie becalmed on tropic seas immense

And motionless, till after long suspense
And anxious hopes deferred from day to day,
Set in my stubbornness I rust away.

Do you remember him who went last year
Of whom no news or tidings ever came ?
Now in his mother's eyes the sudden tear
Accompanies the mention of his name ;
And when the sunset with its scarlet flame
Kindles the West and all the East is dim,
His sister haunts the rocks and weeps for him.

I am determined but my heart is full
Of sad misgivings lest with erring feet
I never seek my door again to pull
The latch and enter where the room is sweet
With shadow, and the voices from the street
Mix with my reading, and the footsteps chime
To the delightfully recurring rhyme.

And what is better than of afternoons
To seek a bank beside a rippling stream
And slumber to imaginary tunes—
Sleeping and dreaming till all efforts seem
Lost labor and the world itself a dream,

Since we are happy, lying in the calm
With summer poured around like fragrant balm ?

Nevertheless I hold it is not fit
That he to whom increasing years afford
Enlarged abilities should idly sit
And eat forever from his parents' board,
Waiting till death deliver him their hoard
Of scanty savings ; but should go alone
To win a fit subsistence of his own.

The slow performance of ungrateful toil—
The labor in the mountain and the mine,
The task of tillage on a stingy soil
To crush from sunless grapes a sour wine
And reap lean harvests by the after-shine
Of pale autumnal sunsets in the frost—
Suits them whose vigor has been early lost.

I am not satisfied to live like these,
Who in the night lie down to brief repose
And rise to labor, knowing little ease
Until the shadows of the grave enclose
Their names and them in equal-ordered rows
Of unambitious mounds—none come to search
For them around the calm impartial church.

But I would see the world before I die—
Before I die and leave my bones to bleach
And whiten with the weather or to lie
Among the other graves beyond men's reach
And knowledge ; while along the broad bright beach
The lively breezes frolic merrily
And ships go sailing up the shining sea.

Thou art the one companion of my youth,
And I have opened to thee all my mind
Concerning my departure that the truth
May dwell with thee securely though thou find
That men tell evil tales of me and bid
Abuses to my name or that the crowd
Revile me as ungovernably proud.

The trees begin to whisper in the wood ;
The night mysteriously deep and still
Draws on toward morning while the moon, which
stood
At starting on the summit of the hill,
Has climbed and culminated. In the chill
My breath condenses like a soul just born
Into the world between the night and morn.

Twilight invests the valley like a cloak,
But on the mountain lies the full-faced dawn ;
The mist is rising in a spiral smoke
Over man's dwelling, lonely wood and lawn ;
Insensibly the spectral tide is drawn
 Up from the ocean, and the winds consort—
 I must be going for the time is short.

BRIEF AS WOMAN'S LOVE.

LOVE me, sweet, a summer's day
When the fields are all grown over
With the eglantine and clover,
For a summer's day is long—
Love me from the sun's first ray
To the even song ;

From the moment when the mist
Rises over shoal and shallow
And the marshes where the mallow
And the purple iris grow,
Ere the gray-cold sky is kissed
To a lively glow ;

While the vivid roses blush,
Happy in their lonely hollow
Where the swiftly fitting swallow

Passes them at early morn
In the palpitating hush
As the day is born.

Love me all the morning-tide
Floating by the river's edges,
Underneath the cool green sedges,
While the tempered light is dim
By the winding water-side
Where the lilies swim.

Though the noon relax with heat—
As a slender silver wire
Melting in a furnace-fire
Leaneth from the fervid blast—
Do not cease to love me, sweet,
While the day shall last.

When the afternoon is warm,
Let us sit with no words spoken
Where the quietude is broken
Only by the whistling quail
And the bees' incessant swarm
And the old wives' tale ;

Told us by the lapping stream
Of unknown and nameless places
Filled with unfamiliar faces
And mysterious sweet things —
Incoherent as a dream
That the darkness brings.

Sit until the whip-poor-will,
Sad to see the daylight dwindling
In the woodland, at the kindling
Of the glow-worm's feeble spark,
Crieth from the sombre hill
In the falling dark.

Love me so a summer's day
When the fields are all grown over
With the eglantine and clover,
For a day is short at best—
Love me till the sun's last ray
Fadeth from the West.

AS SHE PLAYETH.

SOFTLY strike upon the strings
Till the answering music rings

Like the ripple of a stream
Running low across a dream.

Death stalks ever on the earth,
Grief more frequent is than mirth ;

So half-grave amid the gay
Let my fancies idly stray.

While thou murm'rest 'neath the moon,
Humming to thy strings a tune,

Half-forgotten ballads sweet
In the shadow's dim retreat ;

Faces rise up sharp and stern
As the souls behind them yearn—

Dead they many years have lain,
“*Reviens, amy*”; ’t is in vain.

Froissart writing of the knights,
Villon of the lost delights,

Drayton, Suckling, Lovelace—dead ;
Where they passed, we too shall tread.

Am I loved as once were they
In the old impassioned way ?

“*Ou sont les neiges,*” he sang,
Voices sweet as thine once rang,

Clearly as thine own is clear,
Melted with the snows last year,

“*Suis-je, suis-je, suis-je belle ?*
Dictes-moy.” Who now can tell ?

Though enwrapped in tinkling rhyme
Blotted is her face with time.

Since the flower of thy face
Bloometh but an instant's space,

Let us through our moment's span
Love each other while we can :

In the grave to which we go,
Thee perchance I shall not know.

Vacant wandering of the mind !
Time and Love can no man bind ;

Peace, my vainly fluttering heart—
Come, then, let us kiss and part.

SERENADE.

THE crickets chirp and the night-winds sigh,
The round moon rises, the light draws nigh ;
Then come, my love, and away we 'll fly
Over the fields of sleep.

There 's naught to lighten but moon and star ;
All things are different now by far
From those which the gleaming sun doth mar—
Mars for the fields of sleep.

Then come, my love, and away with me ;
Far up to the moon and the stars we 'll flee
Where the sources of love and longing be
Over the fields of sleep.

AT PARTING.

I.

Not in laughter, not in gladness,
But in sadness

Let us part ;
For the days are long and dreary
Dragging weary
In my heart.

As the moon her beauty covers
When she hovers
Ere she go ;
Lest the earth behold her fleeing,
And when seeing,
Faint with woe ;

So about thy features beaming,
Fairer seeming
Than the sky ;

Wrap thy dark hair's mantle flowing
At thy going
Lest I die.

II.

Now draw thy glove from off thy hand,
And let thy fingers warm
Lie curled in mine as though they loved
The shelter of my arm.

And draw thy veil from off thy face
And therein wrap my heart,
Which beateth, ah, how wofully
Ere soul and body part !

Take it ; 't is thine ; it knows none else ;
'T will only beat for thee ;
Have pity on me ere thou go,
Leave thine to beat for me,—

Lest those who see thee that thou hast
Two hearts instead of one,
May rail upon thee and may say,
“ How cruelly she 's done.”

SONG.

THE slower the river,
The broader the stream ;
The deeper the darkness,
The sweeter the dream.

The greater thy coldness,
The harsher my pain ;
If thou smile upon me,
Joy cometh again.

The stars' gleam at midnight
Is caught in thy hair,
The rose-flush of morning
Thy lips ever wear.

Thine eyes have the shimmer
Of vaporous moons,
Thy voice hath the music
Of mystical tunes.

The sun is but darkness,
Thy face is my light ;
When thou art not present, .
The noonday is night.

MIDSUMMER.

I LIE amid soft moss, dry grass
And the sweet scent of roses crushed,
And think of thee.
I hear thy voice in leaves wind-brushed,
Thy features in the clouds that pass
I dimly see.

I feel thy presence when the sun
Looks o'er the hilltop with red smile
And wakens me,
To look upon thy face awhile,
And then return, when day is done,
To dreams of thee.

A VISION FROM HERACLITUS.

WHY should one day be full of fancies rich,
And then the next be unproductive, dull,
As if the thoughts crept blindly through the dark
To seek an opening and could find no such ?
Why should the eve be richer than the day,
And gruesome midnight richer than the eve,
But richer than them all the time between
The gloom of midnight and the glint of morn ?
To those that waken not, the time of sleep ;
But whoso wakes and listens then can hear
The drop of souls into the gulf of time.

All day I sat in mourning with the earth,
Watching the rain fall and the mist arise ;
But could not give expression to my thought.
All eve I watched the dim lights stricken back
From off the domed and gilded Capitol,
And could not give expression to my thought.
As black, reflective black, the water lay

Along the stones that paved the lonesome street,
And could not throw a single image forth
That did not have extraneous form before ;
So black, reflective black, my spirit lay
And could not body one creation forth.
So I abode till midnight with despair ;
But in the richness of the time between
The gloom of midnight and the glint of morn
I had a vision, and expression came.

Why should not sleep be life and life be sleep ?
We carry little life into our dreams,
But we bring back our dreams into our life.
Can there not be coherence in our dreams,
An underlying law, when read through all,
That will explain all and make sense of each ?
We search with wearied brain and straining sight
After the laws of this we call our life ;
And when we find them, what forsooth are they ?
Nought but the images projected forth
From that same brain, the way that same brain
works.

Can we not do this very thing for dreams ?

But in the richness of the time between
The gloom of midnight and the glint of morn
I had a vision.

Past and future flowed
Into a present, and all time rolled out,
A turbid sea of days, into the flood,
Eternity. My soul was carried out,
A leaf along the stream to see the change,
The hopeless but eternal change of things.
And first I passed through all the change of life,
Seeing that joy is fleeting but pain stays,
And woe the ground upon which all men meet,
And that all life is but a change of griefs.
I saw my soul pass onward into sleep :
Then I said, " Here is rest, Nirvana comes ; "
But there was no rest from the ceaseless change,
For sleep was all a change ; first, to a dream,
And then change in the dream and still a change
Back into waking, but there was no rest.
I saw myself go down into the dark,
The dark that lowers round the underworld :
Then I said, " Here is rest, Nirvana comes ; "
But there was no rest from the ceaseless change ;
For from the body old, new forms arose,
And so close was the body to the soul
That still the soul clung to it and became
The immaterial forces that reside
In matter and determine further change ;

However, on the weary drifting round
They keep a measure of self-consciousness,
A torment to them through eternity.
Then I cried in despair : " Is there no rest ?
Can no Nirvana come ? Must we go on
Ever through circles of decay and growth
Without a nothingness for the decay,
Without perfection for the ceaseless growth ? "

And then I saw the cold gray light of morn,
Chill as an icicle, all stricken back
From off the domed and gilded Capitol ;
And black, reflective black, the water lay
Along the stones that paved the lonesome street.

THE EVENING OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

*" And I a maid at your window
To be your Valentine," etc.*

Ophelia's Song in " Hamlet," Act. IV., Sc. 5.

" Young Drop-Heir that killed Lusty Pudding."

" Measure for Measure."

IN sooth he ruffed it bravely
With glistening cloak and sword ;
To see him mince and caper
You 'd thought him sure a Lord :
But how he lies there spitted
And never mouths a word ;
I' Zooks ! So bravely did he shine,
She vowed she 'd be his Valentine.

E'gad, Andrew Ferrara,
My wrong hast thou redressed ;

Come forth all red blood-clotted
From out the dead man's breast,
I'll wipe thee and return thee
Into thy scabbard's rest.
I' Zooks ! So bravely did he shine,
She vowed she 'd be his Valentine.

Full long he fought and fiercely
To pierce some vital spot—
Albeit he lunged wildly,
Yet touch me he could not ;
A plague be on his body !
Let him lie there and rot.
I' Zooks ! So bravely did he shine,
She vowed she 'd be his Valentine.

Ah ! chevalier, my doublet ?
The wind is waxing cold.
Methinks he will not wanton
To-morrow as of old,
Nor will seduce vain women
To love him for his gold.
I' Zooks ! So bravely did he shine,
She vowed she 'd be his Valentine.

Come, chevalier, the tavern ;
 We'll drain a quart of sack
 To him who lies there spitted
 And prostrate on his back,
 The while his life-blood trickles
 Along the white snow-track.
 I' Zooks ! So bravely did he shine,
 She vowed she 'd be his Valentine.

RONDEAU : ON FREYA'S DAY.

ON Freya's day I met my Fate,
I did not vainly hesitate,
 But still went onward steadfastly
 To meet the evil that should be—
What matter whether soon or late ?

The Norna neither love nor hate ;
'Neath Yggdrasil all calm they sate
 While they matured their stern decree
 On Freya's day.

So now I stand in desperate strait
Whence death alone can be the gate ;
 The darkness of my destiny
 Came down and gathered about me
According to the Norns' mandate
 On Freya's day.

CHANCE.

I RUN my risk of what will hap
If I be taken in the trap
 The gods set for us—young or old,
 Whether it be white time and cold,
Or the green trees run rank with sap ;

Whether amid the dust and din
With bloodless faces staring in
 Across the shattered fight I end,
 Or ruined by a jealous friend,
Or murdered by my mistress' kin.

BEREAVEMENT.

IN the dull dreariness of autumn days
There lies a gloomy potency of death
Half-hinted in the rising winter's breath
And fallen leaves along the bloomless ways :
The midnight crickets' melancholy cry
Is sung lamenting those who early die.

Aloft the worn wan remnant of the moon
Amid the giddy clouds' unheeding flight
Goeth as haltingly adown the night
As some sad mourner to a wedding-tune,
That through an open door breaks on his grief
And jars the stones he paceth for relief.

An unborn soul, the wind goes wandering ;
I know that it is restless on the hill
And plain and lake, and that its voice is shrill

With wailing over many a grievous thing,
For in its ceaseless pacing to and fro
It hath beheld the earth's eternal woe.

My mind flies on the moving vacantness,
Eager to find a little spot of earth
Where it may feel a single season's mirth
Before it meet the nethermost distress ;
And yet because its time is overworn
It may not cease continually to mourn.

When one is old his thoughts tread the old track,
And loiter at the long-closed doors, and hark
To hear dead voices creep across the dark,
And look to see the face that comes not back,
And sigh perchance at some remembered joy
That pleased his easy fancy as a boy :

As when the music's master—having wrought
Upon an organ's keys till its great tones
Are volumed forth and all the building moans
In passionate accordance with the thought—
At last lifts hands because the work is crowned,
The wakened chords once smitten still resound.

I am a pipe that hath one time been thrilled :
I try to picture all the paths she trod,
Whether her step was on the frozen sod
Of winter, or a bird's song sweetly filled
The reeling noon of August as she passed,
Or her light feet the autumn leaves upcast.

In the sweet spring-time all the growing shoots,
Oft in the night made conscious that her eyes
Were watching wistfully to see them rise,
Hastened to spread their intertwisting roots
And clothe themselves with many tiny leaves :
But now that she is dead, the forest grieves.

Black and heavier grows the rushing wind :
Can there be such vicissitude of woe
To make a thing inanimate mourn so ?
Surely, as I have done, it must have sinned,
And been sent roving by itself alone
That through much solitude it might atone.

Is there no waste place in this vacant night—
No grim, black, bottomless abyss of lake
O'er which the unimpressive ripples break,

No crevice in a hill bereft of light,
No hollow bole of some decaying tree
Where I may hide my thoughts away from me?

If I could stand upon the tear-beat verge
Of life and death this very night, and know
That in the utter darkness where I go
No ghost of sense could ever re-emerge
To torture me, I should not wish to cross
Although behind me lay a life-whole loss.

For so we grow apace. By our defeat
We gain. We who with clinging to the past
Live in the present, surely shall outlast
Them both, for we are greater. Let them treat
Us for the moment howsoe'er they will,
The future makes atonement for their ill.

It is but seldom man can walk by sight,
Groping in some far corner of his mind
At a tense moment he perchance will find
A flame that for an instant serves to light
The future resurrection of dead hopes :
Again the darkness, and he gropes and gropes.

Who knows on what path he shall meet his fate—
On narrow lane or some broad thoroughfare,
On mountain peak or valley of despair,
Or in the desert after long years' wait ?
That hour his life snaps like a broken reed ;
The dragging past falls from him—he is freed.

WISHES.

I.

I WOULD that I could write
Some music that would smite
Thy heart till thou wert won
To feel some sorrow
When my song was done.

I would I knew some wile
Potent to make thee smile
On me as thou wilt do
On him the morrow
Surely proves untrue.

But I am weak through love,
A thing thou know'st nought of,
Or thou wert less unkind—
I prithee borrow
Some faint lover's mind.

II.

Ah, if I might have a poet,
All mine own, my laureate,
Who would speak his love and show it
Till I bent from mine estate !
Once the graces
Of fair faces
Made the poet's brows elate.

Now alas ! the shadows darken
On his heart that once was glad,
There be very few to harken
Since his songs have grown so sad,
While his glory
Is the story
Of the ancient joys he had.

Mine should write a tripping measure
So the sound of it would please ;
I would hold it as a treasure
Brought to me from over seas—
Gay and sprightly,
Running lightly
To be understood with ease.

THE SEER.

WHEN he reflects on all that has been said
In many books concerning things and men,
And that the most part of these men are dead,
And most of these things are beyond his ken ;

A sense of the unreal comes over him,
As though the figures shifted in a dream
And in the sleep-cloud intermingled dim,
Till he exclaims, " They are not, they but seem."

Why does he not learn what another writes
Instead of writing that which he can learn
By thinking through the quietude of nights
Over perplexities he does but turn

And twist once more ? He knows he can not make
Them luminous—their gloom is so intense—

And that at most from them he does but take
Somewhat to patch out his experience.

But then the extreme loneliness of man,
His helplessness drawn out to such a length—
He does not what he would but what he can
And must do in the measure of his strength—

Make him cry out because he can not see
And with his fellows strive to come in touch :
“ If one believe I have ability,
Indeed, I shall be able just so much.”

And so his crying is a call for aid,
And not a murmur of his self-conceit ;
He speaks in sorrow, hoping he has made
Appeal at which another's heart may beat.

He feels for those who feel not the sublime,
Who merely in the antechamber wait ;
Loud rings his voice across the vast of time—
Haply by this another shall grow great.

A DREAM.

I HAD a momentary dream
Of summer-time—
As tenuous as that thin stream
Whereby at sunny spring the crusted rime
Goes floating off in steam.

All memory of weary things
Was straightway lost—
The cruel-hearted cold that brings
The pale starved nights of winter when the frost
Like pointed iron stings ;

The piteously naked trees
That bow and bend
In lanes across the barren leas,
The sunset burning brightly at their end
While all things living freeze ;

The pendent icicles that gem
 Each laden bough,
And coat each little twig and stem—
 So some cold heartless queen wears round her
 brow
A jewelled diadem.

And in their stead the forest bare
 Green leaves and buds
And many-colored blossoms rare,
 Whose lavished sweetness filled with fragrance
 floods
The rapt enamoured air ;

While twilight darkened shrub and tree,
 And from the south
A little wind came trippingly
 To kiss the dusk with dim, delicious mouth
Redolent of the sea ;

The wires of a tinkling brook
 Along the wood
Vibrated till the leafage shook
 With music and the moon on tiptoe stood
Above the hill to look.

So all was perfect and complete ;
 What summer lacks
When it is come—once more to greet
 Its old familiar winter-wasted tracks—
At last with lagging feet ;

The something wanting to the light
 Of noontide sun,
Of stars beneath the brow of night
 When the long vacant afternoon is done
And day has taken flight ;

The something that has left our side,
 As freshness leaves
The lilies when the dew has dried,
 And for whose absence memory still grieves—
The gracious dream supplied.

But when the deepest silence lay
 On vale and hill
In the last hour before the day,
 When o'er the land there came a creeping chill
And all the sky was gray ;

Then was the slumber-mist withdrawn,
And I awoke
To find my dream and youth were gone,
While on my sorrow miserably broke
The tardy winter-dawn.

A GRAVE-SONG.

THIS is his song, who sits beside a tomb
In the dim dwelling-places of dead kings,
Sits quietly and sings
To the frail shadows rising in the room
Of vanished things.

When our grief ran like a torrent,
And the grave-pit seemed abhorrent
And immense ;
Then we said, They have departed ;
But the words were shallow-hearted
To our sense.

So perhaps when we awaken
From the sleep that we have taken,
It will seem
That these things have never perished,
Such delusions we have cherished
In our dream.

In the darkness of the prison
Bright-eyed visions have arisen
 Like a bird ;
We have taken for a token
Thoughts we never yet have spoken
 Or have heard.

We are moved by strange desires
And impalpable thin fires,
 That have burned
Like the lustre of a jewel
With no fast-consuming fuel
 Stirred and turned.

When the night begins to darken,
We will raise our heads and hearken
 As we go
To the clear illumined places
From the dim phantasmal faces
 That we know.

This is his song, who sits beside a tomb
In the dim dwelling-places of dead kings,
 Sits quietly and sings
To the frail shadows rising in the room
 Of vanished things.

WHEN THOU ART GONE.

WHEN thou art gone ; the leaves will change
On all the trees, the wooded range
Of hills will suddenly grow strange.

When thou art gone ; new stars will rise
About the overclouded skies
Of Autumn while the Summer dies.

When thou art gone ; the winds will wail
In the waste wood, the icy gale
Will lacerate the earth with hail.

When thou art gone ; the ghosts will creep
Along the sunken land of sleep .
At midnight when the dark is deep.

When thou art gone ; wilt thou regret
Thy going, or wilt thou forget
That thou and I have ever met ?

FAILURE.

WHY should the blush of sunset hold
Its freshness on the evening's brow,
For long ago its cheek was old,
And there are no immortals now
We have been told ?

The night is full of winds and sound,
Shadow and transitory lights,
Strange echoes strangely interwound,
And faces out of ruined fights
Long underground—

All tangled like the skein of life,
That none may ravel out his thread
Save by the cutting of the knife,
And lying on his bare straight bed,
Beyond all strife ;

Beyond all strife, beyond all growth,
When the sweet seasons' tongues are dumb
And every voice of change, where loth
The busy morning is to come
And stir his sloth ;

Where neither sun nor moon avails
To break his sleep or alter it,
When dreamily the daylight pales
Before the dusk ;—but this is fit
For him that fails.

Would that the light might never run
Along the mountain-tops again
In currents from the pulsing sun,
And that with all the ways of men
I might be done !

UNHEARD.

"Hippogriff in Air."

IF we had ever passed Love by
Without a word,
Or to His slightest peevish sigh
Had not deferred ;
Then would it be no wonder
That He should so deny
The hearts that break asunder,
Or that our penitential cry
Should go unheard.

But we had always followed Him
Through fire and flood,
Or where His mystic ways were dim
With bloom and bud
And shadow of the flowers,

O'er which His pinions swim
Through the long summer hours—
White-feathered wings, but on the rim
A tinge of blood.

Let no one flatter as before
His withered pride ;
And let us worship Him no more
What e'er betide,
After the anxious trial
That we in patience bore,
Rewarded by denial :—
Close up His gilded temple-door,—
His power has died.

THE TIRED LOVE.

BE glad and let the wanton little laugh
Adorn thy lip ;
Gather thy mouth from which Love used to quaff
The sweet light liquor of a kiss ; let slip
Thy hair about the cup :—
He will not sip.

He seems a little older than He did,
Though some have said
That Love is never old. His upper lid
Shuts on the lower as His strength were dead ;
He hardly can hold up
His heavy head.

He is too delicate for this cold clime,
Too fair and frail
For this self-conscious, disappointed time ;

He is a puny modern child, and pale
As sorrow, being born
To fret and wail.

He has begun already to distrust
His mother's word ;
She seems old-fashioned somehow. Through the
dust
And din of later years she moves unheard,
Unnoticed and forlorn—
She seems absurd.

He is a little sorry for the things
He used to do ;
Half-heartedly His conscience pricks and stings
At the mere recollection. He is through
With such poor joys. Is this
The Love we knew ?

Come, let us go away and leave Him there
To pine and pule ;
He would not recognize thee now nor care
That thou hadst loved Him once, but call thee
fool,
And greet thy tender kiss
With ridicule.

FOR HER MOOD.

LAUGH and we laugh,
Weep and we weep with thee :—
All the unruly sea,
Covered with foam and chaff
Or with dark wreckage strewn,
Still followeth the moon—
Laugh and we laugh,
Weep and we weep with thee.

If thou wilt sing,
Thy cheerful song will be
In our poor memory
A memorable thing
When thou art far away ;
Nor are the times so gray
Nor sore our sorrowing
But we may laugh with thee.

And when thy song is sad,
 As it may sometimes be
 When lovers disagree
And all the world turns bad ;
 Let us in some low seat
 Sit silent at thy feet,
Till thou again art glad
 And we have wept with thee.

ON THE UPLAND.

ON the upland all is still
As the shy approach of sleep ;
Silently the shadows creep
Round the lonely quiet hill.

Morning grows to afternoon ;
Afternoon to eventide
When the stars come side by side,
Waiting on the rising moon.

Nothing after cattle-call
Breaks the silence, save the slip
Of a pebble or the drip
Of the distant waterfall,

Or the insects' feeble croon
Or the howling of a dog,

Far away amid the fog
Hoarsely barking at the moon.

In the dusk the fire-flies
Haunt the margin of the marsh,
Where the tangled sedge is harsh
And the dismal cricket cries.

Afterwards from dark to dawn
Sprawling spiders come and spin
Deviously out and in
Cobwebs on the rusty lawn.

Placid is the pool as glass ;
No intrusion ever jars
That still mirror where the stars
Rise and culminate and pass.

IN MAY.

ALL night the river running through the rushes
Murmurs love-stories as it seeks the sea,
And all day long the silver-throated thrushes
Sing songs of thee.

On the warm Southern slope the white wind-flowers,
With here and there a purple violet,
Made delicately bright by April showers,
Are thickly set.

The sunlight streaming from the West is mellow,
The scent of spring escapes the broken mould,
The cowslips growing in the marsh are yellow
As burnished gold.

Out of the wood like voiceless apparitions
Creep the slow shadows, as the changing light
Passes by imperceptible transitions
From noon to night.

And after sunset when the wind has shifted
And whistles on the reeds a thin shrill tune,
When the obscure enchanted mist has drifted
Across the moon ;

The elfish little dreams with human faces
Begin to wander by the drowsy brooks ;
The timid fairies leave their hiding-places
In sheltered nooks ;

And flocking to the upland lawns and levels,
They dance in magic circles till the day
Breaking abruptly on their reeling revels
They flit away.

Come : in their beds day-wearied men have hol-
lowed
Soft sleeping-places where they lie concealed ;
Let us go forth unseen, unheard, unfollowed
Across the field.

We will recline amid the ferns and flowers,
Watching the moonlight on the misty lawn,
While the slow stars descend the languid hours
Until the dawn.

AN INVITATION.

OH ! cast thine idle fears away,
And meet me in the lonely wood
At that still hour when the day
Ebbs swiftly like a falling flood.

Take no precautions for the dew,
And have no care about the heat,
The dry pine-needles thickly strew
The shaded wood-ways at thy feet.

And let thy throat and arms be bare,
And come to me at evening-rest
With one white lily in thy hair
And one white lily on thy breast.

IRENE : EMPRESS AT CONSTANTINOPLE

I. BODY.

THY body is as white
As a snow-incrusted night
 Inanimate ;
Thy face is like the flame
On the altars built to shame,
 The insatiate,
 The great.

Thou art breasted wondrously
As the seething crested sea
 Along the shore ;
And the palace-lights fall sweet
On thy waxen, naked feet
 Passing twinkling o'er
 The floor.

Thou dost warp the hearts of men
In their bodies' narrow pen
 With fierce desire ;
While their eager-burning eyes
To thy glowing face arise
 As coals of fire
 Expire.

II. MIND.

Empress Irene, men call thee peace ;
 But what is peace if thou art it ?
Surely thy brain doth never cease
 To throb and fret ; thou know'st no rest,
Having the fatal gift of wit
 That always proves itself a dangerous guest.

If mind the Empire of the West
 Should give thee, as it did release
From jealousy that sore distressed
 Thy soul at thy son's rivalry ;
Is this vile thing in truth smooth peace
 That adds another slaughter to a sea ?

Thou hast an ingenuity
That serveth only to increase
The darkness of thy infamy
In leaving thee without a peer.
Doth this in any wise bring peace
When what men equal not that they most
fear ?

And fear is perilously near
To hate. What love is there in these
Who from the place of market leer
At thy white litter with white plume ?
And doth thy mind forsooth bring peace
In leading thee unconscious to thy doom ?

III. DOMINION.

Along Constantinople's ways
Thy white steeds sweep,
And in the blaze
Of noon debased patricians keep
The reins, as low in dust they pace
With eyes half-turned to watch thy face.

Thou sittest mightily aloft ;
One hand out cast

On cushions soft,
The other holds a sceptre fast—
Symbol of power too hard won
By deeds that thou hast foully done.

The crimson silks above thy head
Gleam like the blood
Of all thy dead :
It hath been poured forth in a flood :
Thy altars and thy images
Shall not avail thee against these.

Thy beauty hath ensnared man's heart ;
Thy sapience
Hath played its part
And won his mind. Thy hold is tense
Upon his flesh ; too strained to last
Over a multitude so vast.

For men grow reckless with their fear
Of what may be.
Thou hast no tear
At sight of human misery.
Thine eyes roam scornfully about—
Where are those eyes thou hast stabbed out ?

A MAY NIGHT : EXPERIMENTS.

I.

CEASE, give over, let them pass—
Imaged in a broken glass,
Voiced in wailing stricken cries,
Warped by echoes into lies—
Weak, distorted truths, alas !

In the day I have no thought,
All the universe means nought,
Groping fiercely in the gloom,
Beating vainly at a tomb
Like a maniac distraught.

In the night I gasp for breath
At the many things it saith.
Perfume wafted from the grape,
Like sweet breath from woman's face,

Fans the sense and leaves it faint,
Grasping at some half-formed shape
It hath made to fill the place
Of what answers not its plaint :
Arbutus and columbine,
Violet and eglantine,
Climbing plant and creeping vine,
Life-forms passing into death.

All the night is woman-like :—
Cobwebs in the heavy air
Like the touch of scented hair
Fierce upon my senses strike ;
Growths of moss are moist and warm
Flesh upon her unclad arm :
Movements in the leaves of trees,
Billows in the airy seas,
Waves advancing in the breeze
Go forth no man knoweth where.

Many voices there may be,
Many sounds of melody
Piercing into this dim nook—
Twitter of awakened bird,
Poising with affrighted look

When a breaking twig is heard ;
 Wind-brushed leafage beating time
 To the brooks that ring a chime,
 Rhythmic ripple, tripping rhyme—
Waters running out to sea.

II.

Night is a soft, warm dampness. All the sense
 Flies out and beats against the narrowness
Of gloom and quietude that, quivering dense
 Around it panting, holds it powerless.

The perfume from the newly opened buds
 Of trees that overhang the narrow lane,
Pours out upon the blinded sense and floods
 The reeling spirit with exquisite pain ;

Until it makes itself a woman's shape—
 Some humanly desired, understood
Creature upon whose shoulders it can drape
 Its longings, crying : " If she wished, she could

" Render a sweet response to me. The gloom
 Makes me no answer when I ask a sign

Of meaning ; I am beating at a tomb,
Deceived by darkness and the day's decline."

That bed of velvet moss so moist and warm
Might be the rounded outline of her cheek
Or pulsing flesh upon her unclad arm—
She seems so real, yet she will not speak.

In the thick depths the murmur of a brook
Croons low ; the twitter of a wakened bird—
Hush ! nearer yet the wind-brushed leafage shook,
A twig broke or some tiny creature stirred.

" Speak, if there be an answering voice in thee ;
Or if like passions through thy being surge,
Let them pass out and meet the soul in me,
And our two natures yearningly shall merge

" Themselves to one." The dewy cobwebs sway,
And lightly flying on the languid air,
Float softly o'er the windings of the way
And brush across the lips like rain-wet hair.

The breeze that gives her breath can hardly force
A passage through the air turned molten lead,

And when she sighs her borrowed voice is hoarse—

“Whisper to me thy broken thoughts unsaid ;

“Then I shall know that thou can’st surely feel,

That I delude myself with no vain hope,

But hold my aspirations to the real,

Yearn in the darkness, in the silence grope

“After the tangible.” The dense black block

Of forest shoulders solidly and makes

An end : the tide of night assaults the rock,

Heaves swellingly an instant and then breaks.

Her robe once black has faded to a gray ;

The trees drip with the damp and stand forlorn

That the life-giving charm has fled away,

Hearing the cock crow in the sodden morn.

ON THE RIVER.

WHILE the moon hangs on the verge,
While the lights and shadows merge
On the surface of the river
Softly going,
Gently flowing
With no current left to urge
Us along—a tiny shiver,
Nothing else ;

Draw in closer to the shore,
Where the rushes hover o'er
Their reflection in the water ;
As we linger,
Dip your finger—
See, as I do ; now once more.
Ah ! my image, then I caught her,
Now she 's flown.

It 's the very place I seek ;
Here I readily may speak
 What I 've many days been thinking.
 So I asked you.
 Have I tasked you
Overmuch ? It is my freak !
 Call it so. The moon is sinking
 Rapidly.

Standing up athwart the stars—
See, the rushes look like bars ;
 And behind, the water lapping—
 In their keeping
 Sadly weeping
Like a prisoner with scars,
 Over thee the dark, enwrapping
 Shadows fall.

That is well ; I would not look
On your face. See, in that nook
 How the mist-shape twists and hovers.
 No delaying !
 I was saying—
Pshaw, it sounds out of a book—

We can be no longer lovers—
Did you groan ?

No ? I scarcely thought you would ;
There 's no reason why you should,
You who think of nought but learning,
And are bending
Without ending
O'er dry books. Who thought you could
Know the passionate sad yearning
Of lost love ?

Really you 're too passionless,
You respond to no caress ;
We could never please each other ;
You 're not human,
And a woman
Must have one who does possess
All the weaknesses that smother
A man's soul.

So we 've wasted precious nights
And the dim-lit hours' delights,
While the time we should be spending

Here in kissing
We are missing,
Just because your face affrights
Love from me. We 'd best be ending ;
Let us go.

Out again into the stream ;
Like the faces in a dream
Go the ripples sliding by us,
Oh, how lonely !
If you 'd only
Break the silence ! But you seem
Like a dead man. No one nigh us,
I 'm afraid.

For the moon has sunk from sight ;
Black the water, black the night,
Black your features unrelenting.
Speak ! Accuse me,
Chide me, use me
How you will ; but ease my fright
By your voice's sound assenting
To my own.

Not a word ! You change your place
With that strange look on your face,
 Strange, half-sorrowing, half-mocking ;—
 What 's its meaning ?
 With your leaning
So far over that dark space
 You have set the boat to rocking.
 Please sit still.

God in heaven ! Can it be
That you mean to murder me ?
 Stop and listen. See me kneeling,
 I was jesting,
 Merely testing
If you loved me worthily.
 Help ! The sky and stars are reeling,
 Help ! I drown.

FUTILITY.

SHE is pure as a thought of the dead ;
Her face is a rain-wet day,
With its hint of sorrowful things ;
Her hair is the mist that clings
To the hills grown vague and gray.

She lies and weeps on her bed,
When she sees the wan day die,
For she knows that the sun's decline
Is a symbol and a sign,
Is a curse athwart the sky.

Aloof in her chamber's height
She doth not cease to weep
Till all the shadow teems
With shapes of hollow dreams—
When she lapses into sleep.

She awakes in the depth of the night,
Through the stress of her soul's unrest ;
When the wakened watch-dogs bark
And the cocks crow loud in the dark
As the moon descends the West.

She seeks for the hidden thought,
As her sisters seek for love.
Her candle burneth dim
To a tapering flame, and slim
As the curve of her lips above.

She has visions of deeds unwrought,
Whose fruition should be hers ;
But there comes a breath of doubt
That puffs her candle out,
And her spirit veers and errs.

She lifts the painted pane
That the stars may give her hope ;
But black on the sky, the trees
Are shaken by the breeze,
And the branches sway and slope.

The spray of the broken rain
Flies sharp on her hair and lips,
And sad in the gloom she hears
The sob and fall of tears,
As the heaven weeps and drips.

Then the hours of her youth
Troop by in the dark and sing :
“We are gay and wanton-faced ;
Come now for we pass in haste
With swift and silent wing.”

But she waits for the voice of truth ;
For the spell shall be destroyed,
And her life will no more be vain
In an aching night of pain,
If a light arise on the void.

SILENCE.

How shall I sing of pleasant new-mown fields
 In summer afternoons ;
Or calm hushed evenings when the sunlight
 yields
 To low, broad, swaying moons ;

Or some melodious song that clings about
 The busy human throngs—
How shall I sing when I have come to doubt
 The value of all songs ?

It is not that the earth holds less delight
 Than it was wont to hold—
There is the splendor of the dropping night,
 The stars are in its fold.

The flowers on the lonely wooded hills
 Are blossoming as fair,
And sweetly mirrored in the placid rills
 Lie pale blue depths of air.

But to the scene alone its beauties cleave,
Not to the words whereby
I strive to picture how the branches weave
Strange patterns on the sky.

So I am silent till my time be come ;
And if I find no voice,
Then am I quite contented to be dumb
Where I have made my choice,

Contented, though at night may come old ghosts
Of days, and fear of days
That will be dead, to harass me in hosts
Upon blockaded ways,

Contented, though the world with frowning face
Look in upon my quest—
Shall I take heed of failure or disgrace
When I have done my best ?

THE END OF SUMMER.

I.

THE windy little ripples run
Across the tops of waving wheat,
The ponds lie sleeping in the heat,
The crows fly over one by one,
And summer lingers in the sun.

Another field of grass has grown
In place of that cut off in June ;
And though the second perish soon,
A few brief pleasures it will own
Before it be unkindly mown.

This is the time for one to stray
Where man infrequently obtrudes
Amid the woodland solitudes,
Where summer's luxury holds sway
A little moment ere decay.

While lying in the sun he dreams
More sweetly for the lack of sleep ;
Into his thoughts meander deep
The mingled voices of the streams,
Till very fair his vision seems—

Of maiden in a vist'ed lane,
To whom the heaps of golden-rod
Caught at her throat and bosom nod,
Who is in gladsome weather fain
To time her steps to some refrain

That ripples blithely as she goes.
So youthfully he dreams of love,
Till darkness on the leaves above
And tree-trunks casting lengthened rows
Of shadows hint the daylight's close.

Then hastily he wakes to mark
The weary steps of his return,
Stopping at intervals to spurn
The hindering branches or to hark—
While sadly falls the early dark.

II.

Now in the night the air is chill ;
And in the stead of peepers' song
That roused the Spring, the crickets throng
The meadows underneath the hill,
And chirping lustily they fill

The spaces of the night with sound
Announcing that the Fall is nigh ;
A youthful moon swims in the sky
Far down on the horizon's bound ;
A few dead leaves bestrew the ground.

If one is old, his failing sight
Sees visions from the fading past
And such few faces as outlast
The years—and so for half the night
He lingers by the firelight.

But when the last sad embers die,
He looks to see how Summer fares—
The rising of a storm impairs
The quietude that reigned on high,
And clouds are swept across the sky.

The fickle wind veers in the vane,
The moon has left the troubled West ;
And later as he sinks to rest,
He hears the rattling window-pane
Monotonously drip with rain.

The marches of the Fall are crossed ;
When clear and cold the morning breaks,
The rugged oak forlornly shakes
With half its wealth of leafage lost ;
The earth is shivering with frost,

That checks the river's restless flow
Along its bare and whitened edge,
Where whistling in the stiffened sedge
Autumnal winds swing to and fro,
And life is colorless as snow.

SONNETS.

I.

SUNSET.

THE sullen sun beyond the lone dark reach
Of marsh burns out his strength, and the day dies
Across in the weird East where the moon flies
The ragged clouds with her hold secret speech—
So dark indeed the counsel that they teach
That lest one read their secret in her eyes
They draw about her, and the winds arise
Drowning their voice, and each concealeth each.

Yea, vain to seek the secret of the years
Whispered unto the listening moon by night
Without a breathing pause in her swift flight,
When the fierce glances of the sun she fears
Are hidden as he first withdraws his light,
Leaving the night-wind and the wail of tears.

II.

WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF SONNETS.

Not as a dread and evil-boding dream
That glaring stands beside us through the night,
The while we feel the presence' subtle blight
And hear the round-eyed owlet's gloomy scream—
Not so the spirits of the great dead seem,
But rather like some white cloud's fleecy flight
Leaving a trace of sorrow faint and light,
Which tarries only till the sun's quick beam.

For ghosts of great men are but words and deeds :—
The deed observed more in the outer strife
And more apparent in the world's great needs ;
But yet the word too ne'er availeth nought :
The one is chiselled on the cliff of life,
The other written in the book of thought.

III.

NEW YEAR.

ENWRAPT in darkness, girt about with fear,
The snow drawn like a hood around the face,
With slowly groping, hesitating pace
And eyes fixed on the darkness like a seer
Who readeth in the future as if near
The promise of a peaceful resting-place :
So like the others of his short-lived race
Moves on to dissolution the Old Year.

If thou now goest down to meet the dead
And tell them of the living they have known,
Forget not him who sadly sat alone
In the dark dead midnight to see thee go—
Be not forgetful of the life he led
That haply she be listening and know.

IV.

MIDNIGHT.

So calm the ever mournful shade of night,
So dim the dusty roadway winds along,
Though filled by an innumerable throng
Of pallid spectres following time's flight,
Drawn by his stern hand's everlasting might
And all unheralded by trump or song,
So fierce the hours' rushing and so strong
That scarce I know if this dim sense be sight.

If so alive ; when we at last are dead,
And eye shall see no longer nor ear hear,
When all the sense is numb to hope or fear ;
What will it matter then—old joy or woe—
What deeds were done once or what words were
said ?
We shall not then be conscious nor shall know.

V.

REST.

LIKE one who wakens from a dreamless sleep
And hears the water dripping from the roof,
And sees running across the night's black woof
The silver threading of a star ; while deep
With peace his spirit lies and will not keep
Grasp on the past that seems so far aloof,
Now when the day's stern task and trying proof
Uplift a space, and he has ceased to weep.

As such an one awakens into calm :
So would I waken one time after life,
A single instant when death's pangs are o'er,
To feel my utter freedom from the strife
And my release from every fear of harm—
Then turn unto my sleep forever more.

VI.

HEREDITY.

WHEN I reflect on all that has been done
In unremembered ages ere I came,
And that my life was kindled at a flame
Lit from another and preceding one
Of sequent torches reaching till the sun
Embodied fire first in mortal frame,
And that I am a part of many a name
And many a nature, yet am wholly none :

Then do I question whether I am I ;
Until I see a cloud in purple fold
Suspend the Ganges, Amazon, and Nile,
And all the feeding streams that multiply
Their tides of which the cloud is made ; the
while
It keeps its individual form and mould.

VII.

RESTITUTION.

As at the close of some sweet summer's day,
Which passing gently out behind the hill
Is mourned in woodland by the whip-poor-will,
The moisture—that at early morning lay
Along the ground but that the thirsty ray
Of noon-sun stole from every little rill
Until the greedy heat had drunk its fill—
Unto the earth the evening dews repay :

So when the envious distance holds your face
And jealously abstracts you from mine eye,
Leaving me lonely in a lonely place,
Sadly to watch the dark stream creep along ;
A gentle-hearted memory draws nigh
And maketh me atonement for the wrong.

VIII.

MISTAKEN.

WE have no hope of succor—we who fight
Without a standard in the midmost fray,
A ragged remnant brought at last to bay,
Contending vainly with the foes' despite
Until beneath the cover of the night,
The wretched ending of a futile day,
Wounded and worn we drag ourselves away
To die as wild beasts die, deep out of sight.

I would that I had been aware of this
Before my feet had come so far to find
The battle and my ruin ! I was blind
In such a cause to struggle so amiss ;
In vain were love's half-proffered lips resigned
And wasted all my sacrifice of bliss.

IX.

MUTATION.

How joyful was I when I did conceive
The precious hope I held a single hour ;
So bright it was with promises of power
I wondered at it, fearful to believe
That such an one as I could so receive
Possessions fit to be a princess' dower :
Then in the dust my haughty thoughts did
cower
And lost me what no effort can retrieve.

My hope was like a sudden flaring fire
That slight and ineffectual branches nurse ;
Until the slender store it feeds on fails,
It sends on high a glowing crimson spire,
Then on a sudden all its splendor pales,
Leaving the darkness of the night far worse.

X.

PAST PRIME.

I JUDGE by this quiescence I am old :
 I watch the dark, damp shadows 'neath the hill
 At eventide calmly. Without a thrill
I see the glory of the sunset rolled
Up to the zenith ; crimson heaped on gold
 Moves not my heart, so still, so deadly still ;
 Nor those last notes the tender thrushes trill
To reassure their mates when shades infold

The sombre earth. Then when the crickets sing
 In multitudes their simple songs that show
The little lives beside the great, they bring
 No longings as they used ; while to and fro
The winds of Autumn in the tree-tops swing
 But have no voice—and I am old, I know.

XI-XII.

BLOOD-ROOT.

I.

AND in my dream I came upon a place ;
A long, low, grassy slope, I seemed to know ;
A little thin complaining water's flow
Was passing in a hollow at its base ;
The pallid blood-root flourished on its face—
As pale as dead man's cheek, which the great
 woe
Has whitened ere a single night could go,
But whence, if bruised, the blood runs red apace.

I did not know the spot by memory :
'T was that my heart first shuddered, then stood
 still
While through my very being went a thrill—
As one a curious spotted stick doth see
And laying hand upon it hastily
Findeth he holds a snake clammy and chill.

XI-XII.

BLOOD-ROOT.

II.

ALTHOUGH a dream, the terror lingers yet ;
And so perchance when I unwept, unknown,
In the soul's future shall go on alone,
I shall come so on some old sin unwet
Sufficiently with tears of wild regret,
Some horror dragging forth the deep-breathed
groan,
Some deed for which no penance can atone,
Or thought on which the mark of Cain is set.

For in our life unheeded swings the beat
Of consciousness upon our secret sin—
As tongues of thunder shaking the retreat
Of winding waters, grow exceeding thin
When heard through cart-wheels' rumble and the
din
Of haggling in the brazen city-street.

XIII.

INTERMISSION.

OUR life has meaning. Under the vague dome
Of heaven we have journeyed day by day,
And only seen at morn the workers stray
Afield, at noon the bees construct their comb,
At eve the tired cattle coming home—
All meaningless ; but when has cleared away
The final hill, then through the shrouding gray
And mist of distance we have looked to Rome.

Yet it is sweet to loiter on the road
Into the future that we may hear sing—
Like a brook's stream where no stone hath abode
Without a soft moss-growth for covering—
Some old musician whose song simply flowed
Because life seemed a simple little thing.

XIV.

RESURRECTION.

HAVE they a resurrection—they whose eyes
Have been directed always to the earth,
Whose faces have been turned to idle mirth
Away from lofty thought and high emprise,
Whose souls have been forgot? And if they rise
Fleshless among the souls of greater worth,
How shall they live in such unwonted dearth,
What shall concern them when the body dies?

For they are like a dweller in a room,
A poor small room, when he who sits therein
Blockades his window to the cheerful sun,
Shuts out the city's active living din
And makes himself accustomed to his gloom :—
One day the house falls ; lo ! he is undone.

XV.

BIRTH.

I CAME upon her sitting where the sea
Had swallowed up a portion of the land
And made an inlet. To the yellow strand
I came somehow ; but where my home may be,
What winding pathways had conducted me
Until I found her sitting on the sand,
Whether blind chance or some love-guided hand
Had thrust me thither, is a mystery.

I had no memories until the lights
Of those great eyes, that seemed to watch the strife
Of ocean, turned ; and there I saw the sites
Of ruined cities, faces that were rife
With out-worn passions, lost and broken fights :—
Then I made conscious wandered into life.

XVI.

NOT TO BE.

I SHALL lie down and none will me arouse
In the care-taking morning or the swoon
Of the still languorous warm afternoon,
When by the deeper brooks the cattle browse,
Or day's suspension when the sun doth house
His aching head beyond the ribbing dune
In the curved ocean, or the night of moon
And falling stars—but I shall always drowse.

Life will go on for those who cannot choose,
In the familiar way. The startled flame
Of chafing and impassioned blood suffuse
The cheeks of men and women till they name
Old futile questions to the life I lose ;
And getting no reply, embrace their shame.

XVII.

SEPARATION.

As lies the level of an upland lawn,
Faint with sweet mem'ries when it first
assumes
Its nightly covering of purple glooms,
While the great sun is silently withdrawn ;
Or later when the day is wholly gone,
And it is resting drowsy with perfumes
Of newly springing buds and apple-blooms
Until the coming of the amber dawn :—

So lie my shadowed thoughts and mutely yearn
Over thy dim departure that their stream
Of daylight is cut off—their sun's bright beam ;
While lesser lights of heaven vainly burn
Above the quiet of their fragrant dream
Through the dull meanwhile waiting thy return.

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XVIII.

ABSENCE.

ALAS! thine absence, Love, will do me wrong,
For I shall go forlornly here and there,
And in the height of summer find earth bare
Of beauty as though wintry winds were strong
On the bleak hills ; autumnal thoughts will throng
In the lone nights, and I shall scarcely dare
To breathe the fall-corrupted August air
With sight of thee unsweetened all day long.

The knowledge of thy going mars the days
Ere thy departure with foretaste of grief,
Nor will my heart-sick hours know relief
Till thou, my season, come again to raise
The summer from its dull despondent ways—
Therefore, I pray thee, let thy stay be brief.

XIX.

LEAR.

I HAVE beheld strange deaths—the death of hope,
And youth low-lying with its limbs disspread
On the cold ground ; and I have seen love dead
And its once sweetly tempered servants mope
Peevishly, sitting on the grave's gray slope ;
And I have known the soul to go unfed
Till it lay starved and stiffened in its bed,
Even beneath the heaven's broad free cope.

But I, thank God, have never seen before
The reason drowning in the darkened brain,
While all along the passageways of pain
Great outward-risen winds and waters pour
Over the broken barriers, and vain
Is the last struggle at the shattered door.

XX.

UNANSWERED.

WHY art thou silent? Is there anything
That into love's still lips can put a breath
Or are they frozen in the cold of death
Forever? Have they ceased from murmuring
In the soft moonlight, as a straining string
Breaks with the stress of the wild words it saith?
Hath their sound ceased as music perisheth,
And henceforth shall I never hear them sing?

Why art thou silent? Thou hast need to speak
Now when the distance and the lapse of days
Darkens upon thy dimly outlined cheek
Like a long shadow from the sun's eclipse,
And I can know thee on the darkened ways
Only by some chance whisper from thy lips.

XXI.

INDULGENCE.

BECAUSE thou hast compassion on the corn
After its season stacked in useless sheaves
Amid the stubble where the sunlight weaves
Its golden threads no longer, nor the morn
Blossoms with ruddy summer, but the torn
Rack of the clouds in early darkness leaves
Long shadows, while the whining night-wind
grieves,
Making the winter utterly forlorn ;

Thou wilt be filled with pity of the song
That leaves the singer's desolation bare,
And does the patience of the hearer wrong ;
And thou wilt substitute for his poor air
Some concords of thine own, a little share
Of all thy sweet innumerable throng.

XXII.

LIFE AND DEATH.

THE kisses of thy mouth have made me weak ;
For there is nothing else of worth in life,
Neither repose nor yet the hard hot strife
Of manful battle ; naught to shun or seek
Except the dipping dimple in thy cheek
And the lips curved to meet it, laughter-rife—
That or the operation of the knife,
The little holes through which the blood-drops
leak.

Life is at best a shadow on the wall
That pleases children, death an idle tale
Of ghosts told in the nursery when pale
And low the lights burn ; but such shadows pall
And even story-tellers' fancies fail—
These things are nothing ; thou, my Love, art all.

XXIII.

DIVISION.

BELOVED, since thou art so sad of face
And sorrowful, while in thine altered air
Appears the shadow of a settled care,
And from thy tender cheeks the tears erase
Their native laughter and begin to trace
The tangled lines of pain ; I would repair
Thy loss by laying down my life, or bear
Thy grief for thee and suffer in thy place.

And though I may not venture to assume
Thy weight of sorrow, for we walk alone
And none can suffer in another's room ;
Yet do not keep me longer from thy side,
And for that I have loved thee and have known
Few of thy joys, thy griefs with me divide.

XXIV.

EVASION.

LET us lie down and rest. The day is old ;
It is not just that we should work by night
When other laborers have had the light
Of the clear morning-sun. Lie close and fold
The blankets round thy feet against the cold,
For they are over delicate and slight
For the world's furrow when the frost lies white
And shivering along the rigid mould.

No doubt another, since it must be done,
Will rise and labor for us while we sleep,
Laying his hand to our neglected work ;
No doubt another will awake and keep
Until the reappearance of the sun
The necessary vigil that we shirk.

XXV.

LOST DAYS.

I COUNT the days I have not seen thee lost,
Although my necessary tasks be done
According to assignment one by one,
Though I have seen the face of life, and tossed
About the peopled world, and rashly crossed
The desert sea with whirlwinds overrun—
I hold those days as days without a sun,
As barren winter-midnights in the frost.

For just as some belated bird repeats
His single song of summer while he beats
With trembling wing against the leafless tree ;
Ever my restless spirit from the streets
Of foreign cities, from the shifty sea
Turned, as it now turns from its tasks, to thee.

XXVI.

AWAKENING.

I WAS like one who sleeps his life away
Before I saw thee first ; across the deep
Of whose profound, unfathomable sleep
Through the long hours of the dawn's delay
Drift the delusive dreams that cheat the day,
While doubtfully along the Eastern steep
The laggard feet of morning blindly creep,
Lost in the darkness, on the hills astray.

I waken with the vision in mine eyes :
Far to the East above the troubled morn
The ragged cloud-drift, like a banner borne
Into the forefront of the battle, flies ;
The wind, exulting like a trumpet, screams,
Careering vanward—and I rise from dreams.

THE END.

